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VISION AND . . . AUTHORITY

OR THE THRONE OF ST. PETER

BY
JOHN OMAN

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

ONE day, happening to be in Edinburgh, I ran across an old friend whom I had not seen for some years. "Having now," he said, "like the old lady, become an 'octogeranium,' I no more read theology, but get my theology from the poets. There is, however, one book I read a great deal, which may or may not be an exception, because I don't know whether it is theology or not. It is called *Vision and Authority*. Do you, I wonder, ever read it?" I said I had not opened it for many years. "I thought as much," he said. "But take my advice and read it. I know it will do you good." As soon as I could find time, I followed his advice: and this re-issue is the result.

The greatest changes in the new edition are in what were the first three chapters. In the first two, part is omitted, and some of the rest has been transposed. Chapter III has been left out entirely, and the present Chapter III put in its place. What has been left out was introduced after the work was finished, and now seems to me worse than irrelevant, besides being of a texture which does not match with the rest. Also a few titles of chapters have been altered, a few repetitions omitted, a few slight changes of order made, and a good many expressions modified. The intention at least was

to make the sequence clearer and the statements more precise, and not to alter in any material way either the thought or the presentation of it.

Only one change from the original form has been left. It is the title. The original title was "The Throne of St. Peter." As the subject is the true religious authority and the kind of person who exercises it, this expressed the purpose of the book as well as most titles do. But the publisher thought that it might be misunderstood as Protestant polemic, and raise needless prejudice. "Vision and Authority," by which it was replaced, has, however, I think, also created some misunderstanding, by suggesting a special religious faculty, which could be exercised in a spacious and merely contemplative manner, which is as far as possible from the intention of the book.

A title, however, once printed is, in a special degree, *littera scripta* which must remain. Even if I could hit on one wholly without objection, to change to it would look like passing off a new edition as a new work, and some who possess the former edition might even waste their substance on the new one under this illusion.

An account of how I came by the title may explain what it was intended to mean. After I had recognized, a little unwillingly, the force of the publisher's objection, I racked my brains in vain for a new title. In despair I set off to see if a neighbour of mine could help. Many miles across the Northumbrian moors brought no light; and he also racked

his brains in vain. Dismissing the whole business, we talked of many other things till it was late, and then I started homewards. By the time I had reached the highest point night had fallen. As I paused to look round on the moorland, now one diffused vagueness, I suddenly thought of "Vision and Authority." I was not consciously thinking of the book, and at the time I had no idea of why or how it came. But, on reflection, I can see how it arose out of the situation. Anyhow the situation can be regarded as a parable.

Suppose yourself on a wide moorland, without anything very distinctive, at any time, in any direction, and, in the dark, wholly without character or feature or visible landmarks, with the mist settling in the boggy hollows, and a sombre heaven above, with too few stars for any one to be identified with certainty. If, being accustomed to such a situation, you are still calmly assured that you will reach home safely, and even directly, to what guidance are you trusting?

In the first place, there is the track trodden by those who had gone the same way before, seen only a little in front of you, but unfolding itself yard by yard as you advance. You are glad of its help so long as it serves. But you may not commit yourself to it implicitly. When it forks, you have to decide which way is direct and which is not; and after a time, when you find it diverge more and more from the right direction, you have to take the risk of leaving it and of faring forward as straight

as you can, across such country as you chance to meet.

The guidance of what you see on earth becomes only the more important. It consists of two things. The first is the little space you see in front of you, which enables you to pick the firmer footing and avoid the softer; and the second is a vague outline, growing clearer as your eyes become more adapted to the dark, which enables you to keep to the higher ground, where the footing is firmer and the horizon wider and clearer, and avoid the boggy hollows, where there is no firm footing and the mists hide from you the face of the heavens. Yet this use of sight for what is near would be worthless for guidance, without a sense of general direction from what is not near. Not only is it distant, but it is more from the heavens than from the earth. If it is a sense of the meaning of the far horizon, even this is seen as its darkness is outlined against the lighter sky. And there is the solitary star, the name of which you may not know, but the direction of which you can confidently trust.

In loyalty to the authority of this double vision of the near and changing and of the remote and abiding, you can make straight paths for your own feet and perhaps straighten out the track a little and make it a little plainer for those who may follow. Yet, if you do not set the earthly track above higher guidance, you will not think that no one can arrive safely except by your particular way. On the contrary, you will know that those who have the

same authority and are loyal to it, if they start from other points, will find the right way to be their own, and not yours. As your own also is yours, you will not shape your course by theirs, but you will hope to meet them somewhere farther on. This double vision, at all events, is what is here presented as our sole reliable authority, to which alone we should wholly defer.

Radical change, either of thought or presentation, after all these years, would have been impossible. But, for three reasons, I did not wish to try.

The first is that the book was the outcome of long years of reading and thinking on a situation which was the more challenging for still having something of newness.

When I went up, at the age of seventeen, to Edinburgh University, the Robertson Smith controversy was at its height. What influenced me at the time was not criticism, but the ecclesiastical attitude towards it. This was expressed by a lawyer of my acquaintance, in a way which shocked me all the more that he was a really good man as well as a most devout elder of the Free Church. "Granting," he said, "that Robertson Smith is right, if it is truth, it is dangerous truth, and he has no right, as a professor of the Church, to upset the Church by declaring it." I hope I have not since weakened in my loyalty to truth, but in those days I thought intellectual truth the one worthy pursuit in life: and this suggested that the Church was not interested in it. Had I been then intending the ministry,

probably I should have been put off it, but this affected me somewhat as a call to my life's work. The same position as this Scotch elder's I afterwards found in Newman. Being highly sophisticated, it led him and others to Catholicism. But, having had it first presented to me unadorned, I was left no option between facing the search for a truth, which would shine in its own light in face of all inquiry, and complete scepticism. This book, whatever be its merits or demerits, is at least an honest record of that search.

The second reason is that the form was determined by the necessity of explaining myself, not to scholars, but to ordinary people, who read little but what our parish minister at home said he had come to in his old age—God's book and the Devil's, the Bible and a certain newspaper. This had two advantages. Religious thinking ought to face the ordinary religious life; and it ought, as far as possible, to be expressed in ordinary language. Otherwise, it is apt to be in the air and end in abstraction. Even so, that it met any response in such a quarter may seem strange. But few things have given me more confidence than the fact that it did. Since then, my work has been entirely with students, and the form of my presentation has altered, but the former has its advantages, and, in any case, there would be no gain in mixing it with the latter.

The third reason is that, at that stage, I had rather seen things by way of intuition than based

them on grounds of reason. Since then I hope I have made some progress in the latter task, but I have found little of the intuition to alter. Much of what is here said is not as new as when it first appeared, but it still seems to me as true, and as relevant to the needs of the time. I still see no reliable ground for faith except insight into reality, and no worthy and final goal except freedom in loyalty to its requirements. Even, if this book says nothing more, it seems worth saying ; nor does the temper of our time seem to make it less necessary to keep on saying it.

JOHN OMAN.

WESTMINSTER COLLEGE,
Cambridge,
1928.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

IN commencing this work I had no thought beyond the more practical issues of the present ecclesiastical situation. It has grown to be an inquiry into the foundations on which all Churches rest. This has followed from the conviction that the chief causes of division are the prejudice which dislikes such inquiry and the indifference which shuns it. Nothing short of a return to first principles appears to afford hope of a solution which shall fail neither in charity nor in earnestness. In attempting this task, I have not always succeeded in avoiding an abstract statement of abstract questions, and, in particular, the first three chapters may prove a stumbling-block to some readers.

The second title was originally the first. As it now rather indicates the starting point than the goal, the order has been reversed. For retaining it in that position there is more reason than mere obstinate adherence to what has once been written. The advocates of a legitimate claimant to a crown have ever been forward to assert his right to the ancient title. The legitimate dynasty of the saints and the rightful dominion of the Church, as here represented, may be very different from the ideas long associated with the Throne of St. Peter, but are surely nearer the sainthood the Apostle in his

own person possessed and the dominion he in his own lifetime exercised.

The friends who have given me encouragement, I would thank, and I am specially indebted to the Rev. W. T. Bankhead for many criticisms and suggestions. Mr. George Alexander and the Rev. B. R. Mein have read the proofs with a care which I venture to regard as one more token of their friendship.

ALNWICK,

March, 1902.

CONTENTS

BOOK I

THE INTERNAL AUTHORITY

CHAP.		PAGE
I	THE PRESENT SITUATION	19
II	ORIGIN AND END	26
III	THE GREAT AND THE SMALL	31
IV	MAN'S HERITAGE	34
V	THE ESSENTIAL ATTITUDE	43
VI	THE AUTHORITY OF THE OPTIC NERVE	48
VII	SEEKING TRUTH	54
VIII	CAUSES OF FAILURE	62
IX	THE UNITY OF EXPERIENCE	71
X	THE TASK OF A PROPHET	79

BOOK II

THE EXTERNAL AUTHORITY

I	THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY	87
II	THE AUTHORITY DIRECT	92
III	THE FOUNDATION OF THE PROPHETS	98
IV	THE DIVINE TEACHER	104
V	THE SAVIOUR	114
VI	THE BLESSING OF SIMON	119
VII	THE FOUNDING OF THE CHURCH	125
VIII	APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION	131
IX	THE UNIT OF FELLOWSHIP	139
X	THE TRUE UNITY	146
XI	THE METHOD OF FREEDOM	153
XII	THE END TO BE SERVED	159
XIII	DISCERNING THE BODY OF CHRIST	167

BOOK III
THE CHURCH'S CREED

CHAP.	PAGE
I ASSERTION AND TESTIMONY	179
II BE NOT CALLED RABBI	187
III BACK TO CHRIST	193
IV THE APOSTOLIC WITNESS	200
V PRIVATE INTERPRETATION	209
VI LIMITATIONS AND CERTAINTIES	215
VII THE MYSTERY OF GOD	222
VIII FOUR VEILS	228
IX IGNORANCE AND INCARNATION	233
X SIN AND ATONEMENT	238
XI WEAKNESS AND GRACE	243
XII EVANESCENCE AND ETERNAL LIFE	247
XIII OPENING AND SHUTTING	253

BOOK IV
THE CHURCH'S ORGANIZATION

I THE TASK	259
II THE IDEAL OF HILDEBRAND	263
III A FULLER SUBMISSION	268
IV THE CHURCH'S ECCLESIASTIC	274
V THE ORGANIZED SOCIETY	281
VI THE OFFICE OF A BISHOP	289
VII THE EXTENT OF RESPONSIBILITY	293
VIII THE LORD'S SERVANT	301
IX A FORGOTTEN SACRAMENT	308
X THE THREE TEMPTATIONS	318
XI THE GREAT ALTERNATIVE	329
XII THE EVERLASTING ORDER	333
XIII THE TWO CHRISTS	339
XIV THE GATES OF HADES	345

BOOK I
THE INTERNAL AUTHORITY

CHAPTER I

THE PRESENT SITUATION

Present difficulties of belief. The unchanging practical necessity of conviction. Supreme question is authority. Suspicion of seeking authority for our claims, and not measuring our claims by our authority. The Church's present task.

IN every age the most earnest souls have thought but little hopefully of the spiritual prosperity of their own time. The conflict with evil lay too heavily upon their hearts to allow them to discover the profit of it. Doubt and question do their work in the open, faith and devotion are by their nature of the secret places. Every age has its own task of interpreting its own experience, and no age has found it to need less than all its faith and all its labour. The impression, so generally received, that our own age is of singular perplexity, may, therefore, only be because we live in the midst of it.

In any case there has been an exceptional shaking of the foundations, so that no one seems quite sure what things that cannot be shaken remain. All authority has been questioned, and moral as well as intellectual confusion has ensued.

The earth, once thought of as given to the sons of men as a possession ample enough to prove them heirs of the Creator, is turned into a sand grain amid myriad worlds. Man, once conceived of as

in the image of God, becomes no more than the last of a long series of living creatures, that have not possessed the earth at all, but have been slowly ground into shape upon its surface, amid the ceaseless jar of physical events. The very soul is turned into a useful function of adaptation, with a singular accompaniment called consciousness. Conscience is analyzed into a deposit of advantageous experiences. The idea of God's miraculous interference in man's destiny is explained away as untrained observation and unverified inference. Much that once seemed of a noble daring in man's hope, has been disposed of as a primitive fantasy about the soul. Religion has appeared easy to trace to its source in primitive ignorance of causes. Christianity no longer stands sublimely alone, but completes a long series of questionable worth. Jesus is but a higher Buddha. The common operations of history and the methods of popular literature explain any kind of sacred writing.

Man is thus left without any firm footing on which to wage the unchanging conflict with the world, the devil and the flesh. No authority either without or within seems to remain, with which he might face the many attractions which allure his senses and the many desires which corrupt his will. Yet the need for such an authority continues as of old, for the danger of failure lies as near, and the calamity of it will be as disastrous.

Personal possession does not give more satisfaction and peace, while personal want is more fiercely

resented. Progress in the arts of civilization has more often made the lust for possession insatiable, than given true enjoyment of beauty. Mere progress in education has less enriched the poor than made them feel more bitterly the contrast between their own experience of toil and privation and the paradise of the rich. And just as little has any educational or social progress robbed the devil of suggestion, or the flesh of impulse. If there has been less coarseness, there has been more subtlety ; if the passions have been less violent, their range has been more extended. Not any more to-day than in times past will men's imaginations and impulses meekly accept the limits even of convenience, except under the stern control of some right and noble personal conviction. Without some sense of higher worth in man, will not the business of life degenerate into a wild beast's scramble for the prey ?

To the more thoughtful, both the material and the moral conflict are one great struggle for solid footing in the earth : and they know that there can be no assurance of victory in the material conflict if there is failure in the moral. Without some sense of the dignity of man, some perception of the higher uses of life, some inward conscience of right, some outward vision of truth, without something imperative because it is great, and not because it is pleasant, our path is into darkness. And if there were any doubt, we need but to consider that loosening of the bonds which begins to be characteristic of our age. Unless, on some good and sure ground, we

can say, happiness is not pleasure, and freedom is not revolt, man's best aspirations will remain shrouded in darkness before, and his best spiritual and moral attainments will vanish again into darkness behind.

The supreme task is to establish freedom upon that impelling necessity which a man's own spiritual vision can alone impose. And if we fail in this, in what can we truly succeed? Any lower aim only increases the suspicion of unreality, which already has given too much countenance to doubt. An authority, maintained, not because it is good, but, because to lose it might be worse, is already undermined. The religion which is maintained, not because it is true, but because, for the mass of men, it is necessary, is already forsaken. Yet, if men cast aside all authority but their own good pleasure, observe no rules in the struggle for possession, gratify to the limits of their powers every appetite, and fill the intervals of activity with bitterness and malice, does not any power which opposes any kind of resistance to this raging flood, deserve at least forbearance? The religious creed may have no reality, the religious control only doubtful authority, but, well or ill founded, are they not, in the present circumstances, to be regarded as necessary?

This attitude is old, and its worthlessness has been often proved. Let us believe, men say, as we have always believed. Let us not inquire any more upon what our belief rests. So they go on in

life, like skaters on a pond from which the water has been withdrawn, the ice floating upon air, and not on the native element that produced it, pretence seeming as good as the reality, till suddenly the crash comes with swift ruin and confusion.

If of all credible hypotheses the most probable is that God is a God of truth, no attitude can be so irreligious as acquiescence in the untrue. The mere suspicion of it paralyzes all higher endeavour. In our day nothing less will save the Church from it than a new testing of her foundations to see upon what Divine word within or without the authority she sets up against man's selfish impulses truly rests. She may no longer, with hope of success, merely set forth her creed and assert her claim, and then try to find some ground for maintaining them, but she must build only as her foundations will allow. Not till she has reviewed her assertions in the light of her intellectual attitude, and not till she has established some agreement between her ecclesiastical confidence and her theological uncertainty, can she hope to put in force the real authority to build up and to cast down, to open and to shut, which has been committed to her charge.

The spiritual problem cannot be solved by evading the intellectual. Obscurantism is already unbelief. Right interpretation of law, knowledge of the causes of things, just views of the universe, true science and philosophy, must be in agreement with every real revelation of the God Who made and governs all things, yea must themselves, within their own limits,

be such a revelation. Religion cannot be virile and stable till this is realized, and openly and courageously faced. What is true for faith may be much greater, but it cannot be in contradiction to what is true for thoughts.

Yet our experience is always more than we can explain and our vision deeper than our understanding, and every right guidance in the end depends on what we see. "Where there is no vision," says a wise man in the Proverbs, "the people cast off restraint." This truth has been little accepted throughout the ages. Every method of compulsion has been looked to rather than vision. Religion herself has not ventured to build on a foundation that seemed so frail, even while she taught that the worth of man and the purpose of God were not forwarded by any other obedience. Yet it remains true that no substitute of force or profit avails where spiritual vision is not found. Human evil is too subtle, too pervasive, to be controlled by any regulation from without, and even could outward compliance be enforced, it were only a hypocrisy and a dangerous covering up of a malignant sore. Nor will pretence of vision, nor vision by any other than ourselves, suffice. The highest creed taught merely from without becomes superstition. And even in the midst of superstition, the people cast off restraint. Like black care, which rides behind the horseman ready to strike at any moment, the thought of God may haunt them, yet men may be lustful and false, cruel and base. As a foreign despotism, this

dominion, however admirable, even though it avail for some measure of external obedience, is ever resented and, when most meekly received, is not a control adequate to the dignity of man. But the control which is of our own insight is of an absoluteness against which worlds cannot be weighed. It extends its dominion over the heart as well as the hand. The irresistible violence of a physical law cannot rival the necessity it lays upon us. Yet, being a necessity of our own insight, derived solely from our perception of our place and destiny in the universe, a perception which teaches us to accept with gratitude the wisdom and righteousness by which we are led, it is a necessity which is the only and the adequate security of freedom. Our present inquiry concerns the existence and the seat of this authority.

CHAPTER II

ORIGIN AND END

First the carnal and afterwards the spiritual. Evolution a religious conception, and Religion part of its story. But a religion of measureless aspiration.

THE whole thinking of our era has been dominated by the conception of Evolution. No attempt to discover our real place in the universe that failed to take account of the stages by which we have arrived at our present height, could hope to satisfy our intellectual needs. For good or for evil, we have come to see behind man an ancestry which relates him to the brute and to the worm. That the first effect has been to lower our thought of his dignity, it were useless to deny. He seems to partake more of the earth, out of which he has sprung, than of the heaven, to which he aspires. Blind experiment and the moulding of circumstances have been used to explain so much in him, as to make it easy to conclude that what these cannot explain has no real existence.

But we have been taught no new thing. It is still the old order—first the carnal, then the spiritual. The beginning of this is not different, except in its dress, from the old: “The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.” Nor is it more opposed to the truth that the inspiration of His Spirit gave man

understanding, if reason and conscience speak of an order which is universal and eternal. And, if evolution sets the making of him in the Divine image as the goal, not the starting-point, this is only how the highest religion has always interpreted the purpose of experience and the meaning of history.

If the highest thing in man is his sense of right and wrong, his longings and ideals, his aspirations after the eternal and infinite perfection, his belief in the permanence of the unseen things of faith and love and in the continuance of the souls that cherish them, and if this has been developed in him in due course as he advanced in understanding of his own nature and of the world in which he is placed, his religion cannot be explained away by the road he has travelled, but the road he has travelled is to be explained by his religion. If progress is in response to higher environment, his ability to recognize the manifestation of the high and holy, often in direct opposition to the pleasant and desirable, is no mere painting of imaginary pictures in the blackness on the corridor of his prison, but is a window open towards heaven, illumined by at least the first beam of the morning.

The true result should not be doubt of the spiritual, but, on the contrary, the assurance that the highest is also the most real. The higher development has resulted from the longer operation of reality; it touches reality at more points; it sets a higher goal; it has in it more of the fulness of our own

developed nature. Many of the defects of the material and fleshly origin of man's highest powers may still cling to them. Crude superstitions, patent errors, unfounded assumptions, may exist in all religions. But the highest is not made doubtful because it is still mingled with the lowest. Holiness and adoration and love have a reality even beyond the things of sense, which are in constant flux and change and depend for their very existence in knowledge upon the still more fleeting perceptions of the physical senses. Evolution may not all be progress : but, in so far as it is, it must bring us nearer the absolute reality. And if holiness and adoration and love are not the manifestation of it, to talk of progress is folly, for we know not in which direction progress lies.

This is the conception of Evolution to which we ought to turn our thoughts. It is time we recognized that while Evolution explains the mixture of the base in us by the way we have come, it cannot explain the high and holy except by the way we are yet to go. The clay which stains our clothes is a relic of the mire in countries we have long passed through, but the gold dust which shines upon the clay, is a promise of rich veins of precious ore in the country into which we are yet to travel. Instead of explaining away the reality of holiness and love, it shows that they alone are the ultimate reality.

Religion, instead of fearing Evolution, should rather welcome it as essentially a religious conception of the world. Religion itself, as an interest which

is universal, which has been the chief motive in human progress, which has been the sure measure of man's attainment, may not be lightly disposed of as the outcome of ignorance and priestcraft. What has begun with man's beginning and grown with his growth, at once maintaining in him the aspiration to do more than live by bread, and deriving for itself profit from his conquests in every sphere, cannot be omitted from the story of his evolution.

Yet no religion which lives in the past and would hold the present in that rigid dead hand, no religion which does not regard the past as merely the education and training for finding, in the perplexities and conflicts of the present, the challenge and the opportunity for the good fight of faith, and which does not set that goal of its victory far beyond our highest dreams and aspirations, can interpret for us this story. It must be not merely a tradition even of the best that has hitherto been attained, even though this has shone resplendent amid the imperfections of our humanity, but it must be a prophecy of perfect freedom in an all-embracing love, which will be the discovery of the ultimate secret of the universe.

The sum of all progress is from necessity to freedom, from a kingdom of physical laws to a kingdom of holiness and love : and the question is what this signifies amid the immensities. If man is not a plaything of events, a sort of earthly planet in an extremely elliptical yet calculable orbit, but is self-governing, able to enunciate his own law and

to follow it, at once his own deliberative and executive council, a spiritual meaning and purpose can be discovered in the long, weary, tortuous way by which man has travelled. Evolution is then a demonstration of an order, not to be measured by its size but by its promise, and not by its temporal endurance, but by the eternal patience and wisdom of God working in it. Were the universe a vast machine, governed by unswerving laws, it should, were it the work of omnipotence, have been perfect from the beginning : but, it would also be without meaning and purpose. Only if the goal is freedom, and its perfection the gain of its own progress, and the universe directed, not to the end of immediate completeness, but to awakening consciousness, kindling feeling, stirring conscience, disciplining will, is it more than a vast mechanical toy. But if the imperfection of the world is a revelation of the purpose of God, a very rebellious kingdom of earth has the promise of a kingdom of heaven, just because in it we may have a revelation of the God who has patience to wait for freedom and the only perfect obedience of love.

We do not doubt the validity of our scientific reasoning outwards to the limits of space and backwards and forwards to the limits of time. And, if we can also no more doubt the unrestricted validity of all we have dreamed of good, have we not found the worship which is not to be measured by the size of the worshipper in comparison with the temple, but which is of a quality without which the temple would be meaningless.

CHAPTER III

THE GREAT AND THE SMALL

Vastness of the material universe. The infinitely small. The reach of man's mind. An order of freedom, to be measured by quality, not size. Determines whether the universe a Temple or a Toy. But a religion which measures by freedom and love, not earthly place and power. The two Peters.

ALREADY we have some answer to the other problem, which is the inconceivable vastness of the material universe and the minuteness, not of ourselves only, but of our whole planet in the midst of it, and the millions of years, amid which the endurance even of our planet is but a short episode, the life of all humanity but of yesterday and our own life not even a watch in the night. Familiarity has had its usual effect of dulling the first impression, but not long ago this dominated men's minds more even than the idea of evolution has dominated ours. And it remains the greater problem. When we turn our thoughts to the spaces measured by thousands of years of light and to our whole system of stars as only one of systems to be counted also in thousands, beyond which there may be still vaster possibilities, we have to say with a new and more overwhelming sense of our nothingness, "When I look up into the heavens, what is man that Thou art mindful of him and the son of man that Thou visitest him?"

There is some comfort in the thought of the

wonder of the infinitely small, which shows the same vastness of power, and more of wisdom and care. We can still say that even the sparrow may not fall to the ground without our Heavenly Father, and that the hairs of our head are numbered. Again it is the mind of man which has reached out to this vastness: and the decisive question is whether he is to find in it a temple for a worship which will exalt him to something of the vastness of what he reveres, or only a nightmare blotting him out in blackness and nothingness.

But the still deeper answer depends on what we think is evolving in our humanity. If it is the beginning of a new order of freedom, governed not even by the vastest of mechanical laws, but by our own insight and consecration to an end which these laws only serve, something is revealed which may justify us in asking, even in the face of myriad worlds, "Who has despised the day of small things?"

Countless spirits who worship with a higher and holier reverence, and who find in it a more perfect freedom, may, for aught we know, need all its vastness and be aware of the spiritual purpose which gives it meaning and value. But it is enough for us, if we know that, in however small a measure, we live in an order which does, so far as we are concerned, give meaning and value to all we know and sets up for us a hope of endless aspiration beyond it, so that the writ of our ideals of truth and beauty and goodness runs to the ends of the universe as much as of our ideas of physical order. When

by this we are made free and obey only the necessity of our own insight, we know that we belong to another order of greatness in which, even amid endless space and time, we can hear God saying to us, "Stand upon thy feet and I will speak unto thee." Then the awe which grovels on its face in the dust is changed into the reverence which looks up with confidence into the face of the Father.

Yet just as no religion which fails to cherish in its heart a growing and immeasurable hope, but stagnates in past achievements, has any place in our eternally evolving world, so no religion, which measures by the greatness of its rule and the age and size of its institutions, and not by the quality of its life and its faith and its hope, has any place in a world of infinite vastness. Nor has any religion which looks upon man as only to be determined by outward authority and ordinances, any way of distinguishing him in quality from what obeys the immeasurable distribution of necessary forces. Hence we seek to understand the real authority of religion, not in the power of the papal throne, which has inherited the empire of the Caesars, which, long as it has endured, abides in face of eternity only for a moment, and, great as it is, is less than nothing and vanity in face of infinity, but in the fisherman of the Galilean lake with his faith able to embrace the infinite and the eternal and his vision of a kingdom to which there is no limit and no end. And the authority of this vision is what alone it will be of profit to restore.

CHAPTER IV

MAN'S HERITAGE

What does it give man to possess? Inheriting the earth. By rights of its surface. By discovery of its beauties. By exhausting all its uses. The title of the meek. Discipline and duty.

ALL men appreciate that possession of the earth which is obtained by purchasing the rights of its surface. For this object they will give restless diligence and self-sacrifice, and will suffer hardening of conscience, narrowing of interest and crushing of affection. And so highly do they esteem success, that they are apt to regard it as decisive of the esteem, not only of their fellow men, which may not be far from the truth, but of the powers which rule the world, which is far astray. Apart from all question of a future, in which there may be no respect even of wealthy persons, the present enjoyment of the rich is as much through the perception they lack as through the goods they possess. What kind of possession of the earth is that which must forget the poverty that hides its head in squalid dens where aching limbs shiver under scanty rags, which casts its children on the street to live by their too precocious wits, and must suffer its daughters to become a prey, not of passion, but of hunger? Too often the joy of possession is only in an uneasy

pride in having what others want, and not in the power to use it for permanent gain. And even if a man makes the most of his riches, after this fashion of material possessing, the only certainty in the end is that, instead of inheriting the earth, the earth will finally inherit him.

A better possession of the earth belongs to the man who discovers and enjoys its beauties. After a fashion the quarryman possesses the marble. Yet his estimate of its worth depends upon no use it could serve in his own hands. Only the artist in spirit sees of his own insight and possesses for his own enjoyment. To him rude outlines and clayey margins are not opaque, but the fair image of his dreams shines through them, and every stroke of his chisel breaks away the shell which hides it from the world. When at length his task is ended and his thought speaks from the marble, he has furnished the proof that the true possession is the image, not the block, and the true possessor is the artist, not the quarryman. The whole earth waits for our chisel. We possess it, not in proportion as we buy the rights of its surface for hard cash, but as we are able to penetrate to its true meaning and beauty. Who is rich as the man to whom the world is always fair and life always full of interest and beauty? The man who lives in the joy of the ideal has much of the childlike spirit to which is promised entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven. Without something of the artist's soul we miss much, making life wasteful and sad. What better gift is left to pray for than

just eyes to see and a heart to love? Let us inherit the grace and beauty of the earth, inherit the surface rights of it who may. Let our kingdom stretch out over the shimmering ocean and up to the azure sky; let it possess tree and flower, mountain and valley, dawn and sunset. And let men serve us, not as they serve the rich with spade and broom, but as they serve their lovers and their friends, with their thoughts and their interests and their affections.

Yet the purest artist's joy would make us heirs of only half the earth. "You have made the choice of a poet, not of a farmer," the proprietor said to Burns, when he rejected deep loam for the majestic sweep of the Nith round the bottom of his fields. And by the farmer's choice men are fed. Not till the human race turned from wandering on the broad plains and looked into the black bosom of the earth, had progress taken its right beginning. Man had no due possession of the earth till he learned the promise of the clod, and rejoiced to have roots in the furrow and seed corn under the teeth of his harrow. And the man satisfied by an artist's joy in life is but a nomad to whom life's largest possibilities remain for ever unrealized. The painfully unselected facts of the realist also must be obtruded upon our attention. He is apt to forget copse and river for ploughed land and manure heaps. He thinks more of the swamp where the grass sours and the sheep rot than of all the other fair acres. His insistent presence has no charm, but, without it, life is shallow, unprogressive, unpromising. It may limit our joy

in what is fair and good, but it will also have us remember that all should be profitable.

Even the noblest selection of what is beautiful in life would still leave us bereft of life's weightiest lessons and largest hopes. Without shallowness no man may avert his eyes from the earth's sin and misery. In face of it humour itself may only be the laughter which keeps back tears, but the earth will have become a place of larger duties and so of unspeakably larger anticipations. All wisdom and hope and truth in life must be sought in larger and deeper sympathy. By this way man has made the grand discovery that it is the very dust of the earth which chokes the wayfarer, which, refreshed by a fairer day, will be as the dew of herbs. Then man's heritage is the whole earth, unselected and undivided. The completeness of his possession is his when he can say, "Blessed be the end of it all, blessed be the most certain and universal of all facts." The greatest discovery is that life with death has ever the urgency of narrowing opportunity, and the sweet compassion of fellow-mortals and the promise of perpetual sowing for richer harvests, while life unending would drag out its uninvested days and leave us even poorer in interest and affection and wisdom and hope.

To many, nevertheless, the belief that the largest possession of the earth is through spiritual insight into its eternal meaning and purpose is little credible. Not the distinction between the ugly and the beautiful, not even the distinction between mine and

thine, seems to draw so broad a dividing line through the earth as the distinction between the secular and the sacred. And only a very singularly cultivated taste can pass by everything condemned as secular without regret, and embrace all that is approved as sacred with enthusiasm. The glories of the earth may indeed be pressed into the service of religion, and then the possession may be more rich and varied. A procession of the Virgin, thrilling with music, gorgeous with banners, and steeped in incense, appeals to every sense, and is for a moment an inheriting of the earth. But, in our climate and with our temperament, religious ceremonial is at best a gorgeous tropical bird in the grime of a Zoological Garden. And why in any case should such doings be distinguished as sacred from the secular functions of other guilds? Is not the answer to be found rather in the accidents of history than in any fundamental religious distinction? Yet, if sacred doings be isolated from secular adornment, and the mind narrowed to what is conceived to be Divine truth and Divine grace, it may well seem that there is no narrower world than the inside of this conventicle.

Yet this conclusion may be of haste and superficiality. If the conventicle is the self-sacrificing assembly of the two or three, it may be where men have their first glimpse of all things fair and good. No step of the ladder by which man climbs equals the first. The great man who has seen all the glory of the earth, returning to the humble home of his

youth, uncovers his head as he passes the village schoolroom where, under bare rafters, a determined man drove into his head the first rudiment of knowledge, because there, and not in the village ballroom, he took his first step out into a wider world. And so should the human race uncover its head as it passes the humblest conventicle, for it cannot be humbler than the places where its first and best lessons were learned. Let it be honoured above spire and vaulted dome, as the hovel of the alphabet and the pothooks has a preference over the stately halls of classical and scientific lore. Interests may be narrow, surroundings dingy, outside is the sunshine and the glorious world, and the interests of men and things. Yet, in view of man's resistance to his own good and of the imperious necessity for directing his limited powers, we may even approve the contrast, and see narrowness and dinginess transfigured into the fitting surroundings of thought and concentration. Progress in religion, as in all other things, demands narrowing of interest and concentrating of attention. To select leading facts of faith and hope and to invest them with a special solemnity is necessary, and to cherish those few interests as specially sacred, to give them a place equivalent to their worth, not for our present gratification, but for our preparation and discipline, is in no degree a denial of a larger world, but, on the contrary, is the only consistent assertion of our desire to play a becoming part in it.

Yet the distinction between secular and sacred is

only the beginning, not the end, of our title to inherit the earth. Life is cleft in twain, and the husk is kept and the kernel is left to dry, and no fruitfulness remains in either, when certain creeds and ceremonies and days and meditations are divided altogether from the common life, and are observed with punctilious care within the limits assigned to them, while the whole working and week-day life is regarded as void of religious content. Then the common life is a state either to be shunned as much as the practical necessities of living will allow, or enjoyed as freely, in all matters and according to all ways and at all seasons not specially included in the catalogue of sacred things, as the worldly heart may desire. The distinction between secular and sacred is of man's requirement, and not of the nature of things: and the nearer we attain to the fulness of our possession, the more the distinction will be obliterated.

Two great words comprehend not a portion of life distinguished as sacred, but all the uses of all the earth. They are Discipline and Duty. Those who have made discovery of them are the meek who inherit the earth. They alone discover their true and complete inheritance. Until now the earth, like the Kingdom of Heaven, has suffered violence, and the violent have taken it by force. But their title is inadequate, and their possession meagre and insecure. Only they who are spiritual can judge all things and hold fast what is good. And their sure guidance is the acceptance of life's discipline and the performance of life's duty. By the dis-

cernment of the supremacy of the gain and the absoluteness of the wise directing, they can accept all experience with the assurance of meekness, and become those whom trial cannot daunt nor opposition dismay, the absolute opposite of the timorous, whom trial easily daunts and opposition easily dismays. They are meek, not because they are feeble, but from a sense so overwhelming of the all-pervading operation of God's wise love that conflict dies out of trust and fear out of obedience. Submission for them is strength and obedience is peace. Courage for them is so wrapped up in faith that they have almost forgotten the word, finding it of too boastful yet feeble associations to be of much use in their vocabulary. Yet the virtue is not lost. It is only superseded. Courage is but a necessary rashness in adventuring our heads within reach of the cruel clanking wheels. Meekness is the knowledge which walks the passage ways and admires the monster grinding our bread-corn. Both in its vastness and in its detail, the earth is for the meek. No astrologer links man's fate with circling worlds more intimately, and no palmist traces associations more carefully in the infinitely minute. Man may be small in infinity, but God is infinite in condescension as in majesty, in detail as in spaciousness.

Of his own adequate share in the blessing he is well assured, for he knows that only his own act could remove him from perfect guidance and perfect care; that the spark of His own creative Will, which God has granted him, alone could lead him

astray from the place God has assigned to him and alone could make him false to the tasks God has required of him. And thus he finds his supreme glory to be his supreme danger.

In view of this danger he is able to count it no loss of his inheritance in the earth, but rather a confirmation of his title, that there is much opposition between his joys and his experience, and much strife between his desires and his duties. Through the discipline and duty of life he is enabled to look forward to the time when God's purpose shall be realized within him as well as around him, not in a subject and enslaved will, but in the instructed and free obedience of heirs of the earth. Then he knows that the earth is not a mere material particle in endless space, but is of vast spiritual importance. He discerns the purpose of God hidden in its perplexities and the promise of God even in its grossness. With this teaching of the spirit made in God's image, he is judged of no man, for there is no place for the intrusion of human judgment: and when he is perplexed, his task is not to consider man's verdict, but to assure himself again, by submission and fidelity, that he thinks God's thought and follows God's purpose.

CHAPTER V

THE ESSENTIAL ATTITUDE

Test reality by use. Only way of entering is to become a little child. The requirement misunderstood. A child's speculations. The condition is of scientific as well as religious necessity.

FOR the exercise of the spiritual nature with which we are endowed, for the sure direction of the spiritual insight which would display to us the glory of the earth, one sole condition has been laid down. It is that which our Lord requires from all who shall enter His Kingdom. Though but a simple condition, it is widely misrepresented, and the misunderstanding is the fundamental religious error. Our Lord's own interpretation appears from the way He applies His requirement to special cases. When the disciples, loyal and brave souls, missed the way through emulation, they were only required to become as a child. But the formal, timid Rabbi, had to go back to the very beginning and be born again. The ardent seeker after truth needs only to turn and change his attitude, the formalist needs to have his whole spirit changed. But to the man stereotyped in creed, dried up in affection, tremulous in action, the child-like soul, with wide open eyes of wonder and cheeks flushed with the beating of the heart, seemed so far away as to require an actual

childhood, a new life. He had to learn that to be born again, even when one is old, into the humility which delivers from hesitation because it has been delivered from self-consciousness, and from blind acceptance of tradition as knowledge and dull conformity to approved rules as righteousness, to be enabled to press to the heart of life in the brave enterprise of self-forgetfulness and to make discovery of its true meaning and purpose, is the only way to save one's life, and not lose it.

To think that to be a child is to be of unenquiring and plastic mind is to be singularly unobservant of children and forgetful of one's own childhood. To suppose that our Lord could take a child and set him in the midst of His hearers as a type of freedom from all questioning, as a white sheet to be written on, as mere clay for authority to fashion, is only to attribute to Him our own obtuseness. Did men not forget, in the frivolously multitudinous pursuits of age, the seriousness of childhood, they could not be so blind to the shadows of mysterious ponderings in the depths of young inquiring eyes, or fail to be arrested by questions which outstrip their knowledge and even transcend their formulas. But, the memory of their own youth having been long replaced by comfortable platitudes, the child's mode of expression becomes for them a forgotten tongue, and the child's thoughts as an undiscovered country. Once each of them was the poor, little, perplexed soul, but, failing to obtain aid from the wisdom and experience of his elders, and not per-

ceiving that they were as perplexed and more ignorant than himself, he attributed their impatience to their omniscience and learned to shut up his thoughts in his own heart, in expectation of an age of wisdom to be reached by the simple process of becoming a man. Then, as he ceased to be a child, he lost life's possibilities with its perplexities.

Under the childlike form of, "Who was God's nurse?" the question of the origin of things assails the child as forcibly as it could his elders in the most abstract expression of it by the metaphysician. Roused by a word or by an incident, self-consciousness awakes. No slow process has accustomed him to the change. With awful suddenness, he realizes that he too must go out alone upon the great stream of time, his own pilot through the storm and the dark. Already he hears the booming of the vast and dangerous ocean of eternity. He looks upon the white face of death, walks in the funeral *cortège*, watches the filling up of man's last narrow and solitary home. Careless people drop hints of how the worms feast below and the angels fail to rejoice above. Ghastly images haunt him as he lies in his chamber at night. After much speculation on the soul, he remains amazed at its invisibility, and goes round the world with his own as if it were a bird insecurely fastened in a cage. Forgetful and unsympathetic people may be able to think of childlikeness as freedom from speculation and satisfaction with authoritative instruction, but it is only because they have themselves lost the sense of mystery.

But He who knew all men, looking deep into large wondering eyes, saw eager speculation on the serious matters of life, eager hospitality to thoughts too vast to be grasped and too noble to be dismissed, and a whole-hearted disregard to all that might turn one aside from the quest. The child-like mind to Him meant eagerness to learn, submissiveness to reality, unconsciousness of the dead formulas which cover ignorance, and the conventions which save investigation. To Him it meant an earnest pressing to the heart of things and an absence of all human substitutes for this intimate personal knowledge. To become a child was to return to the way on which God first started us, to pursue it, unhindered by worldly considerations, worldly distinctions, self-consciousness, deference to prejudices, subjection to formulas; it was to be a living soul, loyal to question, impulse, aspiration, with a reverence which silences the selfish voices and allows the heart to tell what God has whispered to it, and to listen for what He will yet say. It is nothing less than a demand that man shall follow utterly the leading of his own spiritual insight, neither looking with the eyes of others nor suffering hesitation and preconception to blind his own. It requires us, not to be subject, but to be truly free.

The condition is of scientific as well as of religious necessity. Man's search for truth must regard only truth. The help of others is essential, but the authority of others is stagnation. Still more should the search for God be in humble freedom, with a

far higher assurance than the material world can give, that what he seeks is active to make itself known.

The spiritual man has at once a child's modesty and a child's confidence. And on what other condition could infinity condescend to a being who, in a vast universe, draws one breath of life between eternities, or eternal wisdom teach him any lesson? How could man have a mind open to receive things so far beyond his reach, how could he have fruitful daring in knowledge so high, without barren presumption in knowledge so far on the confines of his horizon, save with the glad heart and unconscious trust of childhood? With this humility, which is towards God and not man, he is freed from hesitation as from rashness, from false modesty as from pride. With this childlike heart he may know and love the truth, the more for being far above him, till its darkest perplexities shine with the promise of infinite revelation, and, with a deep sense of having scarce begun, he obtains a great confidence in looking to the end. Thus he has for the voyage of life a buoyant seaworthiness which, at once with wisdom and courage, bears up into the gale, and, in advancing against it, finds at once safety and progress.

CHAPTER VI

THE AUTHORITY OF THE OPTIC NERVE

This trust in our own spiritual insight thought inconsistent with the perfect knowledge worthy of a Perfect Being. Also inadequate to absolute spiritual authority. But true reverence inquires and does not postulate. No pope of vision. Yet vision no inadequate authority.

BUT is not this individual authority, however determinedly followed with singleness of eye, altogether inadequate to the perfect knowledge which would be worthy of the Perfect Being? Is it not to be assumed that the channel by which God shall reveal Himself shall have nothing of human imperfection? In spite of all that has been said of man's spiritual sight, does it ever do more than grope in the dark? How could God endure to have His revelation made inaccurate, uncertain, vague, with so much of man's limitation and so little of God's omniscience? If a human channel be used, must not its errors be eliminated by entirely subjecting the human individuality to the Divine agency? And will it not be further necessary to preserve this original purity afterwards from contamination? Has not the individual exercise of each man's spiritual insight merely led to dubiety and difference? Must there not be, not only an infallible original recipient, but a Divinely appointed authority to

be at once a reliable vehicle of transmission and an assured interpreter? Must not, in that case, to become a child mean to do what you are bidden and believe what you are told?

Moreover is not religion more than a mere individual concern? Is it not also an order and a harmony, which ought to bring into life the true unity? Above all else, should it not set men together as children of the one God? But, if every man's authority is within his own soul, and if his first duty is to follow it, without further considering the opinions of others or regarding consequences, will not every man be his own authority, and a chaos of jangling opinions supplant Divine truth, and a chaos of personal interests abolish Divine order?

But, in temporal matters, we have learned by long experience to doubt the deceptive ease and appearance of certainty to be found by accepting authorities and submitting to them with common consent. Also we have learned how misleading it is to argue to what is, from what we think ought to be. We have discovered at once the glory of inquiry and the folly of *à priori* assertion. In spiritual matters, however, men still reason from the perfect circles of their own conception rather than inquire into the ellipses of reality. It is assumed that, God being perfect in Himself, and all His ways being perfect, His orbit can have nothing errant or oblique, so that, though it is infinite, it may be more easy to predict than man's finite but irregular course. Yet, this is a method of reasoning which has only a superficial

plausibility. True reverence would lay down no rules for God. It would endeavour rather to discover what rules He has laid down for Himself. Presumption cannot go further than to argue on the postulate that God cannot transcend our highest conception of the method He ought to follow. In the spiritual, as in the material world, God's real method may turn all our presuppositions to ridicule. The highest method may be precisely what we have rejected. The unity of one external authority may be precisely that which is too small for the Infinite. Nothing may content Him short of implanting a principle of truth and unity in each heart, short of composing individual difference into a perfect harmony of individual obedience. With great profit the theologian may ask himself the question of the blind poet, and, unless he suffers from a darker blindness, he will not doubt that God's way is higher than our way.

Why was the sight

To such a tender ball as the eye confined,
So obvious and so easy to be quenched?
And not as feeling through all parts diffused,
That she might look at will through every pore?

Why is the channel of sight a nerve and not a sinew, a thread and not a cable? Why, if the Creator would grant a vehicle for the knowledge of the outer world, is it so weak and delicate? And, still more strange, why is it not only weak and delicate, but so personal and transforming that philosophers have contended for ages yet are little

nearer determining what is outward reality and what is only individual sensation and impression? What an amazing, fantastic, chaotic world it must be, the very vision of which depends on the trembling of multitudes of nerves, in varying degrees of health, with no higher court of appeal, no pope of vision, whose eye is not a nerve communicating mere personal impressions, but an open portal admitting unadulterated reality. What is left the high *à priori* reasoner but to exclaim, What unreality! What chaos!

Experience, on the other hand, approves the language of the philosopher as both beautiful and just, when he describes the sight of our bodily eyes as "Divine visual language." Though dependent on signs as arbitrary as the signs of speech, on mere individual impressions, connected with frail physical conditions, the result is not a chaos of personal impressions, amid which every man is left in a solitary world, gazing at the changes of a gaudy but unmeaning kaleidoscope. On the contrary, orderly and invariable signs communicate to us the rational and stable thoughts of the Divine mind, to warn and direct and give delight. And this individual possession, so far from leaving us in arbitrariness and isolation, is the very foundation of an intercourse with minds similarly instructed. With the trembling of a delicate nerve as his sole guidance, man marches more confidently through life than if he were guided by a fellow mortal, or even led by the hand of an angel. So far as light is his guide,

the weakest is irresistibly strong to shut that none may open and to open that none may shut.

Spiritual insight, in its degree, is a like authority and confers a like security. Growth in power and clearness may be of discouraging slowness. The subjugation of thought and act to the guidance we do know may be slower still. Our vision may be feeble, and the mists still upon the eyelids of the dawn. Our disasters and failures and discouragements may be many. The blunders of the seeking soul may long give occasion to the sneer of Mephistopheles :

A little better would his conduct be,
Had'st Thou ne'er given him Heaven's light to see.

But there is an old and wise adage about a class of hasty persons who should never see work half done. Sometimes they sum it all up as a fixed physical order, and call themselves scientists ; sometimes as a fixed rational order, and call themselves philosophers. But the most disastrous are those who sum it up as a fixed spiritual order, whom we can call ecclesiastics, because, as the others do not do, they try to convince men that their glimmerings of sight are more calamitous than blindness, and would persuade men to seek their safety in submitting to be led by the hand, or rather by the nose. But the infant who tumbles into fire and water on the plain will yet learn to walk secure on the edge of the precipice. A wise instinct works in him, and, once having learned to totter on his feet, he will not be

always carried, and rather accepts his fall with a determined if resentful mind. So the same instinct of souls perplexed rather than enlightened by spiritual vision urges them to grope forward in hope of more perfect attainment.

As an accompaniment of this noble aspiration and hope, man's very errors and divisions are more than mere lamentable incidents, and await a better remedy than is offered by shouting, "Fools and blind!" Not by the blind leading the blind, not even by the seeing leading the blind, but by every man following the direction of his own spiritual vision, will men walk with assured steps along the highway of life, and find it commodious enough for all. Even if we were sure that it would never be more than a purblind groping in this life, we should not forsake its use and guidance. If not in this life, then in a better, the day will arrive when, guided by a brighter light and a clearer vision, we shall find the way large enough for all journeyings, and be the more cheerful for its varied activities, when none any more obstruct or collide, but all pass on, each his own but not his separate way, blithe of heart himself, and giving his neighbour good cheer in the passing. And if this be the consummation towards which, in any dim way, we are travelling, how false should we be to our hope, if, for any present security or ease, we submitted even to the greatest and wisest human authority, and did not entrust ourselves boldly to such measure of light and vision as has been granted us.

CHAPTER VII

SEEKING TRUTH

Individual, not individualistic. Nearness to God is nearness to man. Man's experience and God's revelation.

ALL knowledge is individual, not only in the sense that we cannot know with any mind save our own, but in the further sense that we cannot truly know, except as we seek aright, and we cannot seek aright, except what we desire for our own guidance. This admits of error. Nay, it warns us that we are always walking in slippery places.

Yet an individual possession is not necessarily individualistic. The very sense of the danger of error is an assurance of the possibility of truth: and truth alone rightly stands over against the individual. It is truth precisely because it is valid, not for one man's fancy, but for all men's reason. Wherefore, if any human endowment is a faculty of truth, it does not shut us up in ourselves, but leads us out into agreement with a world of men. Agreement in any error would only be a convention, liable at any moment to become a cause of disunion. But truth is a bond of union, determined in the nature of things; and agreement in the truth is the only form of common understanding worth pursuing.

Too frequently the impression is conveyed that,

in spiritual matters, agreement alone is the supreme necessity, and that whether it is agreement in the truth or not is, in comparison, unimportant. The feeling has thereby been created that religion is not an affair of truth, but merely of certain helpful ideas to be accepted and certain profitable things to be done. Even this meagre conception of religion cannot long be maintained, and soon there is merely indifference to it as an illusion.

To be able to seek the unity of the truth in the bonds of love, it is necessary to discern that the supreme purpose of the world is discipline, and that the supreme guidance through its perplexities is duty. If this is not discernment, but delusion, if man's wisdom is to look after himself, seeking pleasure and being guided by astuteness, nothing can bridge the gulf which yawns between man and man. But if our view of the world as discipline and duty is a vision of the truth and not a dream of unreality, we have a revelation of the Eternal Love and Holiness, and the gulf between man and man is bridged by the God in whose likeness we are made. Then the unity of the truth is the unity of holiness and love, a unity not of human convention, but of the eternal nature of God, and eternally manifested in all God's working. Towards this final unity all spiritual knowledge, if it be knowledge, must be travelling, for to be one in truth is to be one in God. In that case, the true reason why we should tremble for the ark of the Lord is not difference in human judgment, however it lead

to the divergence of men's paths, but disloyalty to the truth men know and disobedience to the call of duty they have heard.

The insistent demand for immediate and outward unity may arise simply from a distrust, if not of truth itself, at least of man's power of reaching it. This tempts man to accept any agreement as better than none. But in so far as the cry for uniformity is this distrust of man's spiritual nature, it is a denial, not only of the hope of true unity, but of any good worth pursuing. But also it may be from a right understanding of the evidence which should accompany truth. As the highest truth must be a bond of perfectness, making men one as God is one, it is concluded hastily that unity is the starting-point as well as the goal. In so far as it is a recognition of the necessary condition for the unfolding of man's spiritual nature and for his pursuit of truth, though the form of the demand may be hasty, the substance of it is essential.

We shall never come near to God, if we continue far from men; we can never be coming into the unity of the truth, unless we are coming into union with all seekers after truth. We cannot recognize the Divine things of God without first recognizing their presence in man. To be blind to all the good around us is a sure way to be blind to all the good above us, for, how may we know any good there is above us except by perceiving it manifested around us? Because our knowledge is personal, it does not follow that we are limited to our

individual experience. On the contrary, we are heirs to all the experiences of all men, to all the spiritual vision of the race. From this heritage of the ages, we have received much and yet we have added little. God's manifestation of Himself has not been for our personal experience only, but all creation and all time, all mankind and all man's life upon the earth are manifestations of God : and the man turns to barrenness and folly who limits himself to his own narrow thoughts and futile endeavours. Because we are spiritual beings made in God's image, we may not accept any belief or follow any duty unless we perceive the truth and discern the righteousness. Yet we are not pioneers in the wilderness, explorers in the dark. Being like other men because we are all like God, no human experience, however ancient, however trivial, however far away from our immediate pursuits, may be hastily cast aside as profitless. All human experience is revelation, if the great purpose of life is the discipline of souls and the one unchanging guidance for all men is duty. While nothing may be accepted without discernment, we have in the whole experience of mankind the all-important material upon which our discernment should be exercised. A wide, accurate, historical, scientific knowledge we may lack : but, without an intense, sympathetic, comprehensive, practical knowledge of all that is good around us, we miss our best inheritance among men. Even a spiritual mind, restricted to its own experience, can narrow its vision and regard this

as piety. Instead of building on the summit, we have commenced again at the base, and if we make any progress, it is by deceiving ourselves and building upon the foundations of other men's labours which we believe we have rejected.

Yet we truly inherit nothing except what we also discern. Nothing is ours, however it may be presented to us, except we discover its truth and except it prove itself again in our experience. Mere acceptance of the conclusions of others, mere uniformity of creed or conduct with those who have gone before us, mere unity through suppression of difference, is not the way by which we profit from the labours of the saints, or lay broad and deep our foundations on the whole experiences and discoveries and victories of mankind.

With eyes bandaged in formulas men see only the aspect of life the formula allows, and even that is heavily barred and shaded by the medium. They grow accustomed to the half-light and become incapable of opening the eyes without pain to the radiance which pulsates from horizon to horizon. No more may experience obtrude upon them any idea in its naked perplexity, but only well wrapped round with explanations and with all the colours of it toned down to suit the sombre hues of a twilight soul.

Yet we can no more see with eyes which offer undistinguishing hospitality to light and dust. As is usual, the intruder takes precedence of the proper guest. A mote in the eye is more than the sun in

the heavens. When no distinction is made in life, no choice of right and repudiation of wrong, but all experience is accepted as of equal value, the result is not, as many contend, the only just and comprehensive view of life. When, like the "Preacher," one applies his heart to seek and to search out wisdom concerning all that is done under the sun, by the process of indiscriminately pursuing the enjoyment of every form of satisfaction that earth affords, he only fills his eyes with dust, and naturally concludes that "all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again." Man cannot take in dust and light with equal justice to both. A non-moral view of life must ultimately mean an immoral. Pleasure comes to be the final test of all things. Then the soul and body, abandoned to this pursuit, naturally gravitate towards the baser pleasures. Disappointment necessarily follows. The smaller annoyances of life cause an irritation which distorts all sense of proportion. In the end every man who so looks upon life glares out upon a world seen red and hideous through bloodshot eyes. He is not left a wise and liberal soul, enriched with all the treasures of an unrestricted experience, but, not having specialized upon the light, he specializes upon the dust. What wonder then, if, instead of possessing the earth like the meek, he ends with the wail, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

To see the breadth and fulness of God's manifestation of Himself in life, we must be pure in heart. Purity is the discriminating power which, with

continual, living sensitiveness, like the eyelids, protects without obscuring the spiritual vision. To call the loss of this protection, as it is sometimes called, the way to know life, is the gravest of delusions. Purity of heart is not a limitation or restriction of our experience, but is, for true knowledge, above all for true spiritual knowledge, at once a gateway and a gate, a portal and a barrier. Were this perfect, no other protection would be needed. Even when it is far from perfect, other protections of creeds and regulations, when used as permanent substitutes, are only as dark spectacles which add to the blindness. By spiritual insight, protected and cherished, not by dullness and formality, but by continual moral sensitiveness, is man enabled to look at life and all whereby God reveals Himself with the discrimination which alone is vision. As this increases, many helps hitherto thought necessary, many helps of dogma or of human authority which may once have been necessary, will be thrown aside, and a larger individual freedom be found consistent with a more effective, because more willing subordination, till the idea of controlling, much less of compelling belief, will seem doubtful leading even for a peaking infancy, and mere misleading for robust manhood. That which at once opens wide to light and closes instinctively to harm, and which needs no regulation, though it were from the most enlightened and best of men, is the sensitive conscience which is as quick to open at the call of duty as to close at the approach of evil. With grow-

ing sensitiveness, [the individual, and the many individuals which make the community, if constantly on the alert to do the deed which will show the doctrine, do not need to have the way pointed out or to be led by the hand. Mere hard morality, mere adherence to accepted rules of conduct, the most irreproachable respectability, sustained and directed by the most unimpeachable orthodoxy, cannot show the next step and much less the wide horizon. Only those who are adaptable, sympathetic, loyal to conviction, humble in service, keep their spiritual vision fresh, and find it of a keenness, sureness and range adequate to the necessities both of their belief and of their practice, whether of the most intimate private guidance or of the most public and wide association.

CHAPTER VIII

CAUSES OF FAILURE

Success requires a better guarantee than unquestioning submission. May have failure in the search itself, in the moral requirements, in our personal fitness, in our relation to our fellow men. To redeem from shallowness follow the Great Teacher. The Queen of the South. "Moses in whom ye trust." The preaching of Jonah. The precedence of the publican.

BUT are not these conditions beyond measure difficult? How hard is success, how easy is failure! The wisest and best seem insecure, the ignorant and foolish beyond hope. How much simpler that God should speak and men obey, that God should set up His authority and men submit. The things Divine are only doubtfully revealed even to the wise and prudent, and is there not an end of revelation to babes?

The knowledge of God is difficult. It requires a true and rightly directed life and all our earnestness. How may we seek the Highest with less than our best endeavour? It demands conscientiousness. How may we draw near the Holiest, if not by following the best we know? It demands penitence. How may we hope to have fellowship with the Infinite Purity, if we cherish anything with which He may not dwell? It demands humility.

How, with pride in our hearts towards either God or man, can we know a Love which condescends from the throne of heaven to the lowliest on the earth? These conditions may be so hard that many will always seek the more easy and direct way of an outward submission to man, rather than this difficult way of an inward submission to God. Yet the conditions are equal for all, having to do only with the common human conscience and the common relationship of man to his tasks and to his fellows. It is a way for babes, a way in which no advantage is enjoyed by the wise and prudent, a way in which learning may fail and ignorance succeed, a way in which even moral attainment may fail and moral frailty succeed.

Four causes of failure continually beset men. They are failure in the search itself, failure in the moral requirement, failure in personal fitness, and failure in our relation to our fellow men.

The first cause of failure is want of earnestness in the search itself. "The Queen of the South shall rise up in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold a greater than Solomon is here." She was far from the source of light and the difficulties she had to overcome to reach it were great and arduous. And after all it was only to hear of the cedar of Lebanon and the hyssop on the wall. Wherefore, she rises up in judgment with the men of this generation and condemns them. There are still those who would

go to the ends of the earth for the hyssop: and they also perhaps pass judgment on the slackness of pursuit of knowledge of greater importance. There need be no surprise if reward is in proportion to diligence. If religion be the weightiest concern in life and its first interest, what wonder if discovery ceases when interest has ceased. And there are Queens of the South, bent on this higher wisdom, who still hurry with eager feet across burning sand and rocky mountain, multitudes who have committed all the words of Confucius to memory, who have pondered for years at the shrine of Buddha, who have tested the precepts of Mohammed in journey and battle, the multitudes who have thought no journey too long and no danger too great in search of the light which shone for them with but a dim and flickering ray. If a greater than Solomon is here, how do they all rise up and condemn us!

The second cause of failure is disloyalty to such rule of good as we already acknowledge. "Think not that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, on whom ye have set your hope." In every pursuit men are limited by their knowledge, their knowledge by their opportunities, and their opportunities by their circumstances. For the range even of his interests each person is responsible only within certain narrow limits. Not to see beyond our horizon, however great or marvellous be the object we miss, cannot be, directly at least, our own fault. The very highest

and greatest, if it is out of the range of our vision, could not accuse us. Our accusation comes from the Moses on whom we have actually set our hope. By such wisdom and righteousness as beckon us forward, by such greatness and goodness as we have been enabled to esteem, and not by anything, even the greatest and best which we have never been in a position to perceive, are we daily being judged. The decalogue of our Moses may be much less than to love God with all our heart and our neighbour as ourselves, and be perhaps the greatest good of the greatest number. The ancient thunders of duty and Divine command may no longer wrap him round, but only rumble with a dubious ventriloquism beneath his feet, yet test the childlike heart's loyalty to the highest it knows. He that willeth to do the deed such as he sees it, will know a fuller teaching ; he that follows a goal to the near horizon, will see an ampler prospect beyond. No man may complain of ignorance, if he has not followed the greatest good of any person, not even of himself, but pursues ends which no manner of moral obtuseness can hold to be a good at all. So long as the moral claims of the present vision are unfulfilled, what wonder if the vision of the highest is undiscerned ? If we are not conscientious up to our light, what wonder if our light be small ? If we will not to do the deed as it seems to us right, what knowledge or intellect can avail to show us the teaching beyond ? Here again we have a condition dependent on the broad relationships of human

life, and not on any accident of education, mental or moral.

A third cause of failure concerns ourselves. "The men of Nineveh shall stand up in the judgment with this generation and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and, behold, a greater than Jonah is here." No man can rid himself of his past life, and our knowledge of God must depend, not only upon our conscientiousness to the present demands, but upon our whole character. We know God, not merely by seeking for Him, not merely by following the guidance we perceive, but by being in ourselves of some degree of likeness to Him, that we may recognize Him when we find Him. To prepare us for fulfilling this condition, there is no sign given to sinful man save the sign of a fellow mortal, who has travelled through the deep and cried out of the belly of Hades. It is still a voice, raucous as the storms against which it has cried, the old monotonous, unentertaining cry to repent. And still the dwellers in the city of outward proprieties are less likely to hear than the men of Nineveh, in whose streets iniquity walks with uncloaked face. The gross vices, the evils which bring their own denunciation and their own open punishment, are still easier to repent of than the sins of the heart. The difficulty is not with the outcast, but with the self-satisfied. The hard task is to show that men may meet all human standards, yet fail before God's. But the task is not ended till even the moral man, as a self-confessed and penitent sinner, recognizes

how he has received much and rendered little, and how self-satisfaction has blunted the nobler feelings, and voluntary blindness dulled the finer perceptions. Only as a sinner crying for pardon and help from a God Whose holiness silences the last whisper of merit, can any man hope to be able to see Him Who dwells in light inaccessible and full of glory. This also is of the common human life, and not of pre-eminence in ability or opportunity.

The last cause of failure is a wrong measure of worth in our fellow men. We may be of those who utterly fail to recognize that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of heaven before us. This is not merely that, while all sins harden the conscience and turn the light that is in man to darkness, the gross vices, which speedily work their own punishment and cry aloud of folly and weakness, may be a smaller hindrance to repentance than formalism and intellectual vanity and conscious superiority ; not merely that, while the gross vices are stumbling blocks which trip up the feet and gash the hands and disfigure the face, the vanity of the heart is a dense mist, which hides the panorama of the hills, but shows us our own shadows looming in front of us large as a mountain. What thus leaves men none the less lost souls amid the brakes and the quagmires because they are without suspicion that they are not safe on the highway of life, is grave : but there is a self-satisfied obtuseness to the first principle of justice that "to whom much is given of them shall much be required," and a confidence rather that to

whom much is given much should be added, which is graver still. In this darkness we misjudge our fellow men, and so misunderstand God. The dry stalks in the sheltered corner may stand unshattered by the winter's storms, yet life may have to be looked for in spring in the rain-battered, broken relic on the wild. The eye which has learned its need for light, the will which has discovered its weakness, the false choice which has realized that it has taken ashes, not bread, for its portion, the throbbing heart which knows its loneliness, may have a promise of life not found in any kind of self-satisfaction fed full on its own unerring wisdom and its own unequalled desert, because it ascribes its privileges to itself as merit. To see that our privileges are only our responsibilities is the supreme task of the humility which would know God's judgment.

To concede precedence to the priest is easy in comparison with conceding precedence to the unprivileged. To value the standing afforded by office, the freedom from contamination afforded by aloofness from the strife of the world, and the sanctity derived from occupation with the vessels of the sanctuary, is natural for the human heart. And so it is also with what is only of training and fear of consequences and social condemnation. We ought to realize deeply the grossness of the stain of the man and the woman who have sold by public auction in the market-place all that man and woman should hold most dear. But we lack true moral

insight till we can recognize that still they may enter the Kingdom of Heaven before us, and have right to the precedence.

Degree being vizarded,
The unworthiest shows as fairly in the mask.

Degree is vizarded by religious observance and social custom, by the presence of protecting circumstances and the absence of temptation, by the timidity which shrinks from disapprobation, and the calculation which is restrained by consequences. A measure of moral consistency, so cherished, may be small proof of moral worth, and afford small insight, not merely into time-honoured distinctions, but into eternal justice. When the mists of pre-conception and self-esteem are dispelled, when priest and prostitute alike show their hearts beneath their lives, the Magdalene, with her sense of shame and her sense of need, may well go before the priest with his official sense of security and worth. Could we discern her worth and, with childlike heart, follow close in her footsteps, we should enter more securely into all holiness, and so into all truth, than we should by following at the heels of the loftiest of the primates.

To redeem ourselves from the superficial judgment which flows from an external estimate of men by what they attain, in indifference to what they aspire after, and in oblivion of the helps and hindrances of their lives, we must follow One who, whatever else may be doubtful concerning Him, knew what was

in man, and never judged by the outward appearance.

On all these conditions, it is manifest, that things still may be revealed to babes which are hidden from the wise and prudent.

CHAPTER IX

THE UNITY OF EXPERIENCE

Problems intellectual and spiritual. Any port in a storm.
Humility, a pilot cautious and bold. Faith in the indivisible
unity of life. The true and the high.

YET the reason why much is revealed to babes which is hidden from the wise and prudent, is not that wisdom and prudence are evil. It is that, though great gifts, they are not the greatest, and that, like all else belonging to erring man, they are capable of misuse. Men are so satisfied with their guidance that, forgetting their limits, they use them in spheres where they are out of place, and cease to strive for still higher gifts of insight. Intellectual acuteness cannot discover the things of God, and the man who assumes that it can, will only be misled. School learning has its limits. Trains of reasoning go but a little way. Even the profoundest learning which assumes its own omniscience, does it in ignorance. Wisdom and prudence, self-confident, blind to their limitations, and void of humility, distort the balance of a man's own nature, furnish him with a false estimate of human worth, direct him to only a section of life and experience which is never the most essential. The mind is absorbed in what is special, in what is of the detail and not of the vastness of life, to the neglect of the common and

perennial, which is of work and duty and patience and love, whereby men live and God is manifested. Yet it is no cure for narrowness in one direction to be narrow in another. The true remedy for a one-sided intellectualism is not the abandonment of intellectual endeavour. Nor may the endeavour be limited to one section of experience esteemed to be religious, but should be open to all the teaching of reality. Precisely for this reason that all experience is religious, the intellect must have its place as well as the heart. Instead of its inquiries being contracted, they must be pushed out to the limits of knowledge. False wisdom and prudence here also must be forsaken. We may not rest satisfied with what we already know, and prudently refrain from advancing farther, and esteem that wisdom. Not as wise and prudent, do we embark boldly on the unknown, but as babes in a new world.

Yet many voices, in the name of religion, urge us to abandon this hard conflict with the problems of knowledge and experience. They offer a retreat into the safe shelter of a Church which has already settled them all. Her doctrine is infallible, and therefore unassailable by the mere problems of human science. An unbroken tradition guarantees the inspiration of Scripture, and is independent of a perpetually self-destroying criticism. To this intellectual peace she adds the largest practical security, for the efficacy of her priesthood rests on the certainty of office, and not on the uncertainty of character, and it assures a mystical salvation,

not of dubious victory over the world, but of secure peace apart from the world. And other more hesitating voices offer the same in a lesser degree.

But how may we know the reality of this promise? How may we know the actual security of this harbour of refuge, if not by a full inquiry into the truth? Even if God had not given us the power to solve our own difficulties, but had instead appointed us a supreme, divinely taught teacher and holy infallible guide in life, it would in no way rid us of dependence on the intellect, though it might save us the necessity of exercising any further our own spiritual insight. The duty of inquiring into the merit of any who might claim to be such a teacher and guide, would be entirely a task for the intellect. Only inquiry could satisfy us that we need not inquire further. Only on recognizing the true, may we lay down our task of searching further for truth; and only on being satisfied that we have found the holy are we justified in submitting to its guidance. That God is known, not directly, but by delegate, may be true, is in one sense always true, but this cannot alter the intellectual conditions, for we cannot submit to any representative of God on any less sure credentials than we should require to submit to God Himself. The duty of following truth at all hazards is not altered; and it is only a false wisdom and prudence which shuns the search. The one chief reason why so much more may be revealed to babes than to the wise and prudent is still simply that, with less calculation and prejudice,

they entirely abandon themselves to the leading of truth.

The manner in which this security is sometimes offered, not because it is real, but because there is nothing better, not because it is the true port of our destined voyage, but because any shelter is to be sought in a storm, is an appeal to those very considerations of wisdom and prudence which retard all human enterprise, and take the nerve out of all high endeavour. An appeal to timidity is the opposite of an appeal to faith: nor was panic ever a good pilot. Only the present distress could lend plausibility to such a confusion of issues. Faith must maintain that every perplexity has its blessed lesson, and every trial its gracious discipline, and hold it as wrong to flee intellectual perplexity as to flee moral conflict. To turn back in dismay from the problems which may be the entrance to higher truth, to submit, not to what we have ascertained to be true, but, subordinating truth to ease and safety, to flee before the gale which, rightly faced, might have carried us far on our way, is not of faith but of unbelief. It is the unbelief which cannot see God in all things, the unbelief which sets God and His creation at variance, the unbelief which finds God's revelation of Himself by His words alien and opposite from His revelation of Himself by His works.

To teach that the sole spiritual purpose of intellectual perplexity is to terrify men from all exercise of the intellect, is to set God's creation at variance

with God Himself. Instead of being an appeal to the childlike mind, it is an appeal to a voluntary humility and worshipping of creatures lower than God. To have the highest faith and the humblest submission is to be able to say, "Though Thou slay me with the worst death of blank negation and despair, yet will I trust Thee," and not forsake such guidance of goodness and reality as may afford a hope of leading to a divine and perfect end. True humility will not shrink from question, nor turn back from doubt. It will be as bold to sail on the great ocean across which truth and duty point, as to refrain from adventurous expeditions of its own choosing. Not by calculating danger and shunning it, not by discreetly refusing to follow the impulses of the nature God has given us and secluding ourselves from the influences of the age in which He has placed us, may man best become a little child.

This does not need learning. Any simplicity of faith, untroubled by doubts, may be sincere and childlike. Yet, if this untroubled state is kept against all the growing impulses of youth, and against all the expanding influences of education, in disregard to all the problems of the age, and all the speculations of the learned, kept in spite of our knowledge of what is going on in the world around us, it is not held in a childlike humility, but in a worldly spirit of policy, bespeaking the wiles of experience, and in a dread of trouble, bespeaking the caution of age. The childlike spirit should

carry us out upon the tempestuous voyage of life, with the great reverences unsullied, with no carping spirit of mere antagonism, and, above all, with no perverting bias of evil. It should enable us to face the perils of the soul with the same hardihood as is honourable in facing perils to the body, giving courage by delivering from calculated prudences and self-conscious wisdom. Man ought to be daring. Let him be meekly and loyally daring, and he cannot dare too much. Even the best and most faithful know that they might have arrived many a league nearer the fulness of the truth and the blessedness of inheriting and furthering the good, had there been less prudent calculating of consequences and less worldly wisdom directing the course, and had humility been their pilot at once cautious and bold.

The need of this age, as of every age, is not the preaching of timidity, but the preaching of faith. And the foundation of faith must be belief in the unity of our experience. To fear the intellect is to lack faith, for it is to divide life, to divide the soul, to divide the dominion of God, to divide God Himself. And so it comes that many have two separate divinities, one a God of science, all hardness and law, and one a God of religion, all complacency and love. And they are content to live in these separate realms and worship at these alien shrines. The loss may first appear in religion. It lacks the sense of reality. It ceases to be a victory over the world. It loses virility and becomes sentimental.

But not less certainly the loss will appear in every part of life.

The idea that advance in true science is hostile to religion is a delusion. On the one hand, man cannot degenerate in his soul, and at the same time advance in true knowledge. The man himself cannot be set apart from his knowledge, but he knows only according to the range of his mind, to his high imagination and reverence and fidelity to truth and duty. For a time we may delude ourselves with the belief that moral and spiritual considerations are valueless for the intellect, and that we can work in departments, indifferent to the unity of the soul and the unity of experience. But it can only be for a time, for man's knowledge can never be much greater than the man himself, and he cannot cherish an animal's soul and maintain an angel's breadth of vision. On the other hand, it is equally true that nothing that is true in science can be false in religion, or in any way alien or hurtful. In the name of science views of man inconsistent with what we know of his spiritual endowment, may be proclaimed, but it is not science, for it has not attended to all the facts. No true knowledge can be anything but helpful to true religion ; and when we think otherwise, either the religion or the knowledge is false. If God is one, all His truth is one.

Man's first great stage of progress was passed when he discovered the unity of God, and therefore the unity of experience ; and he will never make any progress except by a better understanding of this

prophetic discovery. It means hatred of the most pious obscurantism ; rejection of the most revered superstitions ; resolute belief that the actualities are the best, and the best the most surely actual ; the settled conviction that, where we find truth, we find God, and where we find God, we find truth. Would we advance at once in knowledge and in holiness, in intelligence and in love, we may never separate the two tests, but must be assured that the truest is the highest, and the highest the truest. This is the prophet's message : and it needs the prophetic courage and inspiration.

CHAPTER X

THE TASK OF A PROPHET

Environment. Stopping at the powers of Nature. The survival of the fittest. The physically strong. True endurance. The religious ideal.

EVERY age needs the work of the prophet to teach it to discover, in every advance in thought, in every change of the expression of thought, God's presence and man's gain. And not least is he needed in an age when the change of thought has been great and the change of expression greater still, in an age when we call God Environment and the permanence of human worth the Survival of the Fittest. Even with the change of name he might have no quarrel, if only men would understand what is involved, and follow it out to the end with heart and soul.

Man is undoubtedly the creature of his environment. He has not made himself. He is a product of the ages, a product of the universe. No material force ever existed, no law of nature, no law of society, but may have gone to the making of him. In his origin he is thus a creature of eternity and infinity. We need a prophet to unfold to us all that is meant by our environment. He alone can teach us to reverence it as a cause adequate to its effect—rational to produce the rational, moral to produce the moral, spiritual to produce the spiritual. Yet, to be

effective, this word must not be in word only, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power. It is much to say God is one, the origin and end of all things, and all is one in Him. But truly to believe in this is to live in a world which is from Him and unto Him.

That men should stop in their explanation of their environment with the powers of nature is not new. On the contrary, it is man's ancient way. The prophet has never found him farther forward or even ready to make any further advance. The expression is now more scientific and this has rid us of most idolatries except the idolatries of material possessions. But the position is the same, and the result, in spite of our larger knowledge, is not very different. Man's environment is not quite so incalculably spooky, but it has to be gambled on quite as incalculably. His wellbeing is valued as physically, and he worships the powers that secure it as devoutly. He has no real unity with his surroundings, even though he think himself entirely the product of them and utterly dependent on them. There is no sense of unity and purpose in his experience. All is either of blind law or the caprice of accident. When calamity befalls, when the old law of good for the good and calamity for the evil fails to explain his experience, he has no clue through the maze. The result as of old, is that he dare not look his problems in the face, and asks no more for truth, but for smooth things. Then it seems, as before, that there is no more to ask for than "to

have plenty of victuals and to be well and see no evil." In the old days the prophet taught that environment is nothing in the last resort but the one God. And that we only require to do justly and love mercy and walk humbly with God to find it one in rule and purpose. The result was as much mental as moral elevation. Childishness vanished from men's thoughts. They were enabled to face life's darkest problems, and to find in them light and strength. The heaviest calamities became the inspiration of the highest hope. Man was emancipated and walked a free man in a Divine world, with an environment worthy of all that was noblest in his nature. The foundation of all right thinking, as well as all right living, was deeply and strongly laid.

Fortunately this work cannot now be wholly undone; and the idea that it can be, should be to ordinary intelligence incredible. Whether we know it or not, we all build on this foundation: and that we do not build better is alone to be regretted. Naturally, if we do not trouble to build well, we do not trouble about what foundation carries our building. Moreover, most convictions worth having are like the sites which can only be retained by being built on. For example, it would not make any difference to us by what power the heavens are fresh and strong, if we are content to be withered and weak and do not wish any stern daughter of the voice of God to stir us up to any freshness and strength.

Again, it must be admitted and asserted that the law which has chiefly operated has been the Survival of the Fittest. No one has ever preached this doctrine like the prophets. Was it not the guiding principle of their deliverances to man, the rule by which they estimated the present and predicted the future? To the mightiest that was unfit they proclaimed destruction; to the weakest that was fit they promised endurance. But they never fell into the stupidity of speaking as if the fit were the mere physically strong, as if it were all a matter of strength to ravin, and the most permanent creature were the beast of prey, and the most important development were sharpness of tooth and strength of claw. As they had conceived man's environment nobly, so they conceived his fitness nobly, as fitness to live in the world, not of the blind forces of nature, but of the almighty, just and good God. Hence they could assail the mighty nation that had vast armies of irresistible force, and declare its weakness and determine its end; while they turned to a poor, weak, scattered remnant of a feeble nation, and predicted endurance and incalculable influence. To them the fit was not the mighty, but the holy; not the violent, but the just; not those who had armies, but those who had truth.

As much as ever to-day we need to be taught that our fitness must correspond to the whole environment of a just and ordered world. The final triumph is not of self-love, but of love, let science explain the reversal of the struggle for existence as it may.

Some explanation it should endeavour to find, and not satisfy itself with denying or minimizing the fact. The highest fitness of man is to learn how to accept the discipline of life, and walk utterly by the guidance of duty. Love, not self-love, has learned the secret of life. We need a prophet to show this fact with insight, with power, with a broad grasp of the facts of life, and a deep and sure penetration into the spirit of man, till we learn, in living, inspiring conviction, that the fit man, who shall survive, is the man who is great in knowledge, for he has humbled himself to learn, but who is greater still in reverence, for he has humbled himself to adore. He has great convictions, for he has humbled himself to be convinced ; but he has also great hesitations, for he has humbled himself into a constant recollection of the limits of his finite intelligence. He has found the world a great school, and experience a great discipline. Peace has replaced anxiety, and faith has been glorified into love. Sin touches him not to anger but to pity. An inspired insight shows him where to be helpful. Stronger than iron in his utter surrender to conviction, he is yet patient with all question and even with error. The human spirit seems to him of such vast consequence and of such unspeakable possibilities that he sorrows with a personal pain over another's sin, and blushes with a personal shame over another's disgrace. Yet such is his faith in God that, as he grows in the sympathy which grieves, he grows in faith in a gracious Divine purpose, unconquered and unconquerable. Hence,

as love makes strong his hand, joy lifts up his head.

If this ideal is false, what is true? If this is insecure, what is certain? If this is not of supreme value, what is of any value at all?

BOOK II
THE EXTERNAL AUTHORITY



CHAPTER I

THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY

Supreme religious fact is the individual. But it is the individual in his place. Man receives much and adds little. Revelation in history. A progressive revelation. The authority of the Church.

IF man has no knowledge of Divine things, if he cannot think God's thoughts and know God's will, if he has no consciousness of truth and conscience of right, if the goal of his labours is not freedom, if he cannot discern something of his place in God's universe and do something to fill it, if he is not, both in his own soul and in his mortal life, in the last resort a spiritual fact, we should not speak of religion, but of physics, and recognize that the ultimate explanation of all things is not love but mathematics. By mathematics no doubt much is explained, possibly all physical things, to the eye of omniscience: and, rightly understood, this explanation is rational and not merely mechanical. On the one hand, it speaks of the Infinite Wisdom which has weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance, and on the other, it places high above them the mind which can number and weigh, and thereby also in some measure create.

But it is the mind which can purpose and love which is the individual made in his own degree in

the image of God, thinking God's thought, and setting before him, in conscious resolve, God's purpose, and being led onwards to his share in God's freedom. Yet it is not the individual as a separate unit, but the individual in his place. His consciousness is the recognition of his place ; his freedom is the willing acceptance of it. All experience is made up of individual impressions ; all morality of individual resolutions ; all God's final purpose of the liberty of His individual children. Yet no man stands alone. The very freedom which is his goal is only the conscious acceptance of his right place in the universe. It is nothing else than the complete harmony of love with the will of Him in whom are all things and through whom are all things and unto whom are all things. Only when that is complete will his freedom be absolute. The actual working out of this freedom, however, is not by accepting our place in the void, but by accepting it among our fellow men. It is a labour of mutual understanding and sympathy, of consideration of others and limitation of self, of so living that others may also realize God's image and fulfil God's purpose, of subjecting personal desire to the general good, of bearing ourselves as free men in a kingdom of the free.

Wherefore, the revelation which is essential to our freedom, which is to freedom as the rain upon the mountain to the spring in the valley, is not a revelation to the individual but to the race. We receive much and add little, and what little we add is not for our personal gain merely, but to be con-

tributed gladly to the general store. Freedom is conscious acceptance of our place in God's world, and this requires conscious knowledge of God's thought and God's purpose in this world, with us and with all men. Man is a conscious being working towards freedom; and he gains it only as, by his own insight and consecration, he possesses it in his own soul. Yet, even this he wins not in solitude, but as the companion of those who, with him, are seeking to enter the kingdom of the free. Wherefore, the revelation of God is not an ever repeated experience of the individual within the narrow limits of his own life, but is a work of the race in which no diligence in the common labour is unavailing. It is a task of history to which no period is superfluous. The revelation has been granted to all inspired souls who have refused to be the playthings of circumstance, who have realized in life a Divine purpose, who have sought unceasingly the Divine ends, who have esteemed that no gain is to be weighed in the scales with truth and righteousness. To them all who follow in the same course gladly owe a supreme debt of gratitude.

A historical revelation is thus a necessity of man's position, as a creature working out his freedom by finding his place amid his fellows, who are called to the same high destiny. That this revelation should be progressive, arises from his position as a creature who can only win this emancipation by conscious acceptance of God's will. His progress must therefore be an education, but it must be the true

education which is at once a revelation and a discovery. The Divine nature within must awake to the knowledge of God, and the knowledge of God must arouse the Divine nature within. Being an education in spiritual insight, revelation must ever be in advance of us, yet never beyond the limits of our horizon ; and being an education in freedom, its claims may be distant, yet can only be known as the ideal for which we strive.

The lesson of all this is the practical lesson which every life exemplifies, the lesson we were taught in infancy and only too imperfectly follow through all our wayward years, the lesson that man's highest hope of advancing is less in his own most strenuous effort than in keeping himself in the directest line of the loftiest progress. We must all build on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, on the foundation of those who have obeyed the Divine call and recognized the Divine teaching. To be faithful to our own spiritual insight, it must be our constant endeavour to be faithful to our spiritual ancestry. A loyal and a true life must be built upon the loyal and the true ; and to be false to this noblest and nearest kinship is worse than to be a traitor to our blood. To be true to this spiritual descent means to be true to our spiritual fellowship ; and the higher our own endeavour, the more we shall know its dependence upon the good and the faithful.

This ancestry and kinship form man's true Church. His debt to it is incalculable, and its authority in some form he must perpetually acknowledge. Yet,

even it, he may only acknowledge in freedom : and how this is possible is the inquiry which now lies before us. We must ask how the authority of the Church, from which we have received so much and by which we have been so largely fashioned, is brought into unity with the authority within, which is the evidence of our spiritual hope, and how, in their perfect harmony, we can realize at once our service and our freedom, at once our personal worth and our absolute place in God's world.

CHAPTER II

THE AUTHORITY DIRECT

An infallible Church. An infallible Scripture. Entire submission. Of the nature of necessity. A progressive revelation made meaningless, and all religious purpose taken out of experience.

How often have we been told that no manner of safety, no mental peace, no security of trust or obedience are possible, if once we allow discussion to arise between the authority without and the authority within, and that if the authority without cannot claim direct, immediate, uncritical submission, it may abdicate and leave the guidance of life to individual whim and preference. If the Church does not speak and man obey, how is peace to reign and truth be securely held and the purpose of the general good faithfully served? Nothing less, we are told, will suffice than a Church which is the mouthpiece of a Divine revelation, the guardian of its oracles, and the possessor of a sure tradition of the interpretation of them. And the logical completion is a head, infallible in applying and expanding the truth for the immediate occasion. To maintain the logic of this position, the Church of Rome has created him, not without some indifference to the facts of history, but with a clear notion of the requirements of an authority which men shall obey and not discuss.

Yet facts are not as we think they ought to be, but only as they are.

To many the same object seems equally well secured by a Church which possesses an infallible Scripture. Though differences may arise in the interpretation and, more still, in the application of the truth, the basis of certainty abides in an authority which can be misunderstood, but may not be questioned. Only when the last word in a discussion is "Thus saith the Scriptures," is there, we are told, a solid foundation to build upon, and a limit to individual argument. Yet here also the question is not settled by determining what manner of authority Scripture must possess in order that the external authority of the Church may be unquestioned, but by determining what manner of authority it has in fact. And then we are on a wide ocean of doubt. We are embarked upon the criticism which may do nothing but question, yet which has at least left one question not doubtful. Scripture is shown to be mighty as an appeal to the heart and the conscience, but to have nothing of the infallibility of a proclamation which directly claims submission. Its great power to persuade was never more certain ; its right, or even its desire, to demand obedience without persuasion was never more dubious. Whatever view we may take of its inspiration, we no longer can think of it as a proclamation written down from Divine dictation by penmen who were so guarded from error as to be mere instruments in the hand of the Spirit of God. Hence, whatever its authority

may be, it is not of the infallibility of verbal inspiration.

But, if it is vain to argue from the logic of the position we have assumed to be necessary, respecting what facts ought to be, it is still more futile to argue from a position in defiance of logic, as is the way of those who accept the conclusions of science and criticism, and who still invoke the authority of the traditional Church. Conclusions which show that the Spirit of God did not give an external guarantee of truth in the past, make it probable that He does not give it in the present. Conclusions which annihilate the old external authority in thought, cannot be made consistent with its continued validity in practice. An infallible Church with a fallible Scripture is absurd. Those who fear that upon the authority left us the old external dogmatic attitude of the Church cannot be maintained, are not mistaken. The attempt to continue it has only had the result of setting inquiry in hostility to security, and of making it appear as though faith rested on any foundation except reality. The result has not been a perfect harmony between God's word within us and His word without, but rather the endurance of an indifferent peace because no better could be secured.

Uninquiring submission to external authority is neither God's method with man nor a desirable method of human obedience, but mere exaltation of necessity over freedom. Insistence on the need of an authority without, not to agree with the authority

within, but to dominate it, is at bottom a disbelief in the possibility or even the gain of freedom. Would not the end required have been better served, had God absolutely subjected man to Himself from the beginning? Carried to its logical conclusion, it denies the religious meaning of experience and a progressive revelation in history. If the obedience of mere submission will satisfy the heart of God, then we can only say that the method God has employed with man is chiefly distinguished from the method he has employed with the planets by the chaos it has permitted. Were it only desired that man should differ from the planets in being conscious of the law he obeyed, why, instead of a slow revelation presenting ideals for an imperfect striving, was not unconditional obedience effected from the beginning by a proclamation of God's mind and will which none might deny and none disobey? It is not mere individual facts of history, therefore, that this view of the authority of the Church leaves unexplained, but the whole method of experience. If God can be satisfied with mere subordination, if His purpose is not to set man free, in the conscious discovery of his own place and willing acceptance of it, in the final harmony of God's purpose within him and God's purpose without him, this strange, perplexing struggle for existence, this world of imperfect endeavour and plenteous failure, is merely a proof of His incompetence.

A Divine Government, satisfied with mere subjection, would mean a world where necessity rules,

and where, in consequence, sin is only an aberration in man and a failure in God, and the cry of remorse, the struggle of the upright, the martyrdom of the faithful are a torture that might well have been spared the race, and the apostles and prophets are of all men most absurd as well as most miserable.

But, if freedom is the highest birth of time and necessity only its well disciplined handmaid, we may have some understanding of the perplexing way by which we have travelled. Sorrow and failure and even sin itself speak at once of man's high destiny and God's patience. And the slowness and fallibility and humanness of God's revelation may be burdened with the same vast and weighty message. If freedom is the crown and apex of life and, for this reason, depends upon life's whole extended base, to the soul that consciously seeks its freedom, all life corresponds with God's purpose, by serving some end of discipline or presenting some call of duty.

Man is not then the chance product of his environment, but his environment is the Divine workshop of his freedom. His dim gropings after truth, his failures and his misunderstandings witness, not to the Divine failure, but to the Divine patience. The slowness of the unfolding is not from God's tardiness, but from men's incapacity. It shows God's patience with men's blindness and error, until they can be brought to see with their own eyes and enabled to walk in their own strength. A revelation which had nothing of this patience with man's failure, would not further God's work of freedom, but destroy

it. Human freedom could no more have borne the grasp of absolute truth and absolute perfection than it can suffer the grasp of absolute mechanical law. To lay hold of man by infallible and final proclamation and dare him to disobey, would not have been to implant in him the Divine image, but as it were to put out the fire by the blaze of the sun. Only extreme haste and ignorance make it possible for us to suppose that the freedom of a finite creature and the absolute perfection of the Infinite could live together in such direct contact. The truly marvelous thing in God's revelation of Himself is not that it subdues man to His obedience, which were easy, but that it makes man free with the liberty of God's children, which is a difficulty only omniscience could overcome.

CHAPTER III

THE FOUNDATION OF THE PROPHETS

Hebrew prophets. Set over the nations. Discipline and duty.
The servant of the Lord. The Old Testament.

ACCORDING to the method of Divine government in all human affairs, progress in the knowledge of divine things comes, like all other knowledge, by one man building on another's foundation. From this it usually follows that there is a line of specially direct progress. We are built upon the foundation of the good and faithful in all ages and all nations. There have been prophets since the day when first impulse was arrested and the immediate interest ceased to suffice, because the first glimmerings of a rule not of appetite but of right, was discerned : and the office has continued in unbroken succession to this day. Yet in this succession so great and ancient, this generation of the free who have resisted the world, the flesh and the devil in the pursuit of freedom, the direct line of the Hebrew prophets and Christian apostles claim from us a special regard. They are the royal race who have grasped firmly the kingdom which others have aimed at dimly. They are in a special sense our own spiritual ancestry, of whom we should have a better right to be proud did we bear them more resemblance. In comparison

with them, the influence of kings and conquerors has been superficial and fleeting. They were weak, but out of weakness were made strong. They were often destroyed, but their destruction was their victory. Though humble and poor, lacking all the advantages of possession and of place, uncrowned by any dignity except the glory of their own faithfulness, they were yet set over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant. Vast armies marched up and down with noise and tumult. Men were used in masses as mere pawns to play with in the game of might and dread. The prophets stood alone, assured only of God's aid, but speaking to men as souls conscious of right and capable of high resolve. While the thunder of the armies has passed like the roar of the billows that waste their strength on a rock-bound coast, their word still echoes through the fruitful earth like the murmur of still fertilizing streams.

Has not the cause of this permanence been just the absence of that method of violence which has so short and profitless a day? Has it not been because they were themselves children of freedom, and ever laboured to make men free? Their influence was deep and permanent because they led men, not by the hasty way of slavery, but by the patient way of freedom. No terror could subjugate their souls. Against the mightiest they lifted up their head, for greater was He Who was with them than all who could be against them. They did not merely talk of

discipline as the first purpose of life's trials, and duty as the first guide in life's perplexities, but, in face of every trial and perplexity, lived by the faith they preached. Vast calamities came upon their nation and upon themselves. The whole world around was in dismay. Panic dictated every folly, and ruin was hastened by the madness of self-preservation. Then the method of freedom was put through the furnace and came forth as tried gold. The discipline which has faced the worst life can afford—loss of goods and loss of friends, destruction of country, dissolution of society, scorn and slavery and death—and has derived such profit of knowledge and of strength that the cost is as nothing to the gain, has approved itself. Upon the prophets all these calamities came, and the result was not dismay, but right thoughts of God's ways, right trust in God's help, right views of God's purpose. Guided only by duty, they ever faced forward, finding their way clearly when all human foresight was turned to folly. Ere their tasks were ended, the trustworthiness of this guidance received every demonstration that experience could give. By the method of accepting life's discipline and doing life's duty, they made their progress in the knowledge of God and of God's purpose with man. Trial could not daunt them, nor opposition dismay; submission for them was strength and obedience peace. Being free in God, nothing could make them slaves in God's world.

As they advanced, they arrived at a more conscious knowledge both of the nature and of the efficacy of

their method. They left behind them all thoughts of material kingships, even of the devout David on his throne, and turned to the Lord's servant, who is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, yet sees of the travail of his soul and is satisfied. At the same time that they penetrate to the depths of his humility, they discern the splendour of his power, for which it was too light a task to restore Israel, and not too hard to be a light to the Gentiles and God's salvation to the ends of the earth.

The inspired man might at times dominate the counsels of men, yet it was not so that his power was known. This shone forth only when it was seen that no appeal was left him except to the faith which is the assurance of things hoped for, the proving of things not seen, when all his resources were the word which had found a response in his own heart made in the image of God and which might be addressed to all hearts having a like preparation. Other authority the prophet had none and sought none. He did not say, Thus saith the Lord, receive it on my authority, and receive it whatever judgment ye may be disposed to pass on it; but he said, Receive it because it is passing judgment upon yourselves in truth and righteousness.

But, if the true content of the Old Testament is the discovery of God's thoughts and purposes made in the way of accepting life's discipline and doing life's duty, and the revelation with which God met men as they drew near to Him by this arduous but profitable path, it will convey its own demon-

stration to all who in the same way are seeking God. We are not, therefore, following the way of the prophets when we support their appeal by any extraneous authority, as though we would ascribe to them the imperiousness they had with such toil and sacrifice laid aside.

The true method of appeal is taught us by our Lord. Never before or since were the Hebrew Scriptures so largely used or so fully understood. With profound insight their deepest lessons were disclosed. They were employed with an easy familiarity. Some half-uttered word was completed by a weighty saying, some half-expressed figure grew into a parable. Truths neglected are brought to light, and truths obscured set in their due prominence. If He refuted an opponent through them, it was by offering a profounder view than his; and if the language of Scripture was used to uphold an error and suggest temptation, He met it by weapons drawn from the same armoury. With a fulness of assurance, moreover, which none other has approached, He built on the foundation of the prophets, not merely showing in detail familiarity with the letter and understanding of the spirit of His predecessors, but at all times accepting their work as a preparation for His own. Their foreshadowings and dim approaches to truth he brought to clearness and fulness, and their preparation of the hearts of men for the knowledge of God He ever presupposed. Yet the use to which He did not put the ancient Scriptures is equally noteworthy. As a final warrant

for belief, as a reason for accepting what man has no other evidence for, He never employed a word of it. His resort to its authority was in great, and evidently in conscious, contrast to the habits of His contemporaries. For them it sufficed to dictate the command, and, indifferent to any response from within, to demand at least outward compliance. To our Lord such compliance was worthless, and He never suggested, by word or act, that any opposition could exist between the Divine revelation as it is given from without and as it is received from within. Hence His appeal was never in the last resort to Scripture but to the hearts of living men, and the true use of the Scripture was only to aid Him in this final appeal.

This authority to speak direct to men the Old Testament Scriptures have inalienably, and no question of criticism can alter it. They speak from experience to experience and the message is not affected by any question either of age or authorship. Nor, as a matter of fact, have we lost but gained in understanding of this their true power, by the questions which have made it impossible to quote them as mere dogmatic utterance of truth, once enunciated to men and never again authenticated by application and use. On the contrary, the intercourse of the writer and reader is again the intercourse of those whose common aim is to understand their place in God's world, to accept life's discipline and do life's duty, and to find their true freedom by finding their place in God.

CHAPTER IV

THE DIVINE TEACHER

One who occupies a place all His own. His claim. Realizes the ideals and satisfies the aspirations of the prophets. His bearing as a teacher. Demonstration of the perfect truth. The method of appeal. Internal and external authority made one.

IN this succession One has appeared who, on any view of His character and work, occupies a place all His own. As no other, He has lifted up this common life of ours. Without distinction of birth or eminence of power, a man of the people, living among the people, a poor man living among the poor, He spoke with unapproachable wisdom and lived a life of unparalleled excellence. Though made solitary above all men by the depths of His thought and the sublimity of His purpose, He walked, not apart from man, but in intimate fellowship with the familiar and the base, yet, after all the centuries, the wonder with which He is regarded has suffered no diminution, and, even with His example before it, He is still no more than an ideal and distant hope for the race. Alone among men His practice was adequate to His precept, so that no distinction need be drawn between what He said and what He did, so that His teaching only expounds His life and His life only enforces His teaching. The ideal He

taught was beyond all man had before imagined of good, and such as man only now retains by constantly renewing it in His fellowship. Judged by His own standard, and no other may be thought of in His presence, the most searching criticism finds nothing in Him to reprove and nothing to amend. Nor was this after the way of man's imperfect striving to obey a law which is above him and without him, but by being the perfect Divine life we best name love.

Regarding Him many things may be doubtful, but His great claim for Himself is written large in the narratives of His life. Yet in Him greatness is at one with lowliness; and it attests itself by at once humbling and exalting. To His followers He seemed able to lift up man to heaven, because He has brought down God to earth; to be the way to the Father, because His truth was the fulness of the Father's purpose and His life the source of every life that fulfils it. Thereby it has become the power, as has been well said, whereby the dead bones of the ancient world had new life breathed into them, and all that is best in the spirit of the modern has been created.

This figure does more than stand pre-eminent in the line of the prophets. To speak of them as predicting Him might mislead. Yet His own claim that they testify of Him is fully vindicated. Who else in any degree fulfils their ideal? Suppose that the conception of the servant of the Lord was only an ideal of spiritual insight and not an expectation

of spiritual foresight, the wonder of its fulfilment is not lessened. If the prophets turned from outward might to the service of the meek as the hope of all true power and glory for mankind, consciously or unconsciously they looked forward to Him who came with all power because He was meek and lowly in spirit. Their ideal, being an understanding of God's mind, was also, in the deepest sense, a forecast of His purpose. Again, the prophets were men of action as well as of ideals, men who aspired and who sacrificed every earthly good and earthly comfort for the realization of their aspirations. Their lives left their aspirations unrealized. Yet they looked for such a Kingdom of God as Christ presented and founded in His own person, and in some measure realized in His followers. The prediction of words which may admit of other meaning, of words which may not so much point forward as be read backward, may be doubtful, but this prediction of the souls who sought to know the mind of God and realize His purpose in the earth, this prediction of the sun by the dawn, of the goal by the progress towards it, of the fulness of revelation by the unfolding of its promise, is already a beginning which predicts its fulfilment.

Yet prophecy was only prediction as the spirit of the prophets was more fully manifested. To test this we must ask how the perfect truth would bear itself among men whose knowledge of God, inadequate, perverted it may be, is yet the result of long endeavour and aspiration, and has ever

corresponded with their progress in freedom. Has it only made clear its absolute perfection to silence all objection and dominate all belief? How would it have fulfilled the supreme message of the prophet, which was the proclamation of the Divine patience? The true fulfilment was the perfect revelation of the Father whose perfection is to send His rain upon the just and the unjust, the evil and unthankful as well as the good and grateful. And it is given more than ever only as a discovery and a victory, not to demand abject submission but to enlarge and perfect freedom. The great demonstration of the Christ is just that He never sets Himself, as the absolute external authority of the perfect truth, in opposition to the imperfect authority of the finite and sinful spirit within, but that He has only one appeal, which is to the likeness of God and the teaching of God within. Jesus speaks indeed with authority. He is not as the Scribes. They had authorities, but no authority. They had nothing to speak from direct, and nothing to appeal to direct. Jesus, on the other hand, speaks from man to man the truth He has seen and to which his hearers cannot be blind, unless they close their eyes. Exclusively He addresses Himself to the primal spiritual authority in man—the spiritual vision which discerns things spiritual. He is not as the Scribes, precisely because when He failed there, He fell back on no other authority. On the contrary, He was able to exclude every other appeal except the appeal to the spiritual in man. No man accepted the truth

from Him for any lower reason than because it had appealed to his heart as true. He had no dignity of place or office with which to impose and no material possession with which to attract. Stripped of all extraneous aid, the truth was left to be its own authority and its own appeal for the hearts made in the image of Him Who is true. Yet, as He would not be helped by temporary conditions, He also was not to be hindered. No accident of station or education, nothing that might distinguish peer from peasant, scribe from fisherman, priest from publican, made any difference in His intercourse with men. All suffered who neglected opportunities or gave way to vanity, but none suffered from limitation of opportunity or lack of outward advantages.

Science has collected many facts respecting the processes of creation, but it can only teach the few who have special ability and special opportunity. Even with the utmost ability and the largest diligence, much must be accepted without the possibility of making personal investigation. But the Christ of God discloses to men the goal of creation, the high perfection which would crown all God's work, so that the humblest can see it, if only he will set it before him as the measure and goal of his own endeavour. Again history has retained some imperfect recollection of the course of Providence. But only few can have any accurate knowledge of this long and intricate story, and fewer still discover in it any meaning. For the great mass of men, it is not for their own investigation at all. Even for

the few who are able to learn and weigh the testimony of others it is still largely a matter of conjecture. But the Christ of God unfolds the method of Providence, the manifold wisdom of God which knows man and considers his need ; and we know its truth at first hand when we submit our hearts and by it attain to peace. Finally, every man has in his own experience some knowledge of the perplexing uncertainty of this whirligig of time. Yet, with his best thought and largest opportunity and the application of his highest ability, he cannot penetrate far. But the Christ of God unfolds both its meaning and its order. He shows that the goal is freedom, and the guidance love. This also we can prove by the personal experiment of seeking freedom and walking in love. In this way Christ appeals direct to the spirit of man, not by its special acquirements or special ability, but through its common needs and common tasks. The knowledge is for the meek, for all who accept life's discipline and do life's duty, and the conditions are that a man should will to do the deed and know the teaching that he be taught of God and so have the preparation for discerning God's Christ. The way may be prepared for us by the instructions of others. Being only children, it may be necessary to guide us to the place, and even to trace the outline for us with the finger. Yet this avails nothing, unless it enable us to make the discovery for ourselves. After all possible demonstration, nothing is truth for us till it flash upon our inward sight, and something goes out of us to meet

it, which makes it, when we find it, the native country of our spirits. Then we have a demonstration of the kind which is furnished when we find the circle which completes the segment, which is all the more wonderful when the segment is small and the circle great.

Christ found men everywhere ready to receive Him as a Rabbi. On the authority of other people they would accept anything. But He insisted on basing what He taught on the authority of their own hearts and consciences. To this end He spoke in parables, that they might not understand on any other condition. He would thereby rouse some to perception, and would not, through dull repetition of truth, confirm men in the ignorance of the letter, which never makes alive. From hearing His words and contemplating His life men might go away angry, perplexed, disturbed, but they never went away with mere outward acceptance of any truth, their ears full of words and their hearts full of vanity, enjoying the reality of their own approval and the delusion of God's. And the chief parable was His own life, for His highest appeal to what is spiritual in man was not what He said, but what He was. He is meek and lowly in spirit. Only by ecclesiastical juggling is He changed into the potentate who will tolerate no difference of doctrine and no variety of service. Instead of asking for such submission as man asks for, such submission as would be an abandonment of our heritage as children of God, He asks us to come as the meek and lowly to the meek

and lowly, and find rest for our souls in discovering our true heritage as children of God. Before us He walks, no lawgiver, no judge, no potentate, but a man, human in all His thoughts and impulses. He mingles with the crowd. He expresses Himself with the colour, the vitality, the movement of the marketplace. Only as the Son of Man does He reveal the perfection of the Son of God.

Thus He is not dependent upon witnesses. Belief, in that case, would be involved in intricate historical questions, a matter perplexing for the special student and utterly beyond the man whose business is not with books. The condition of coming to Christ and learning of Him would then be intellectual, not spiritual. Nor could the profoundest investigation assure us of more than that every assertion came from eye-witnesses of proved intimacy and unimpeachable veracity. The suspicion would still remain that, however enlightened, a personal and external estimate might be so exalted by affection as to raise the earnest endeavours of a fellow mortal to the sinless perfection of Deity. But, if the appeal is to the meek, not to the learned, to all who have accepted life's discipline and done life's duty, each man in his several measure, each man who has attempted to understand and do, may find the witness in himself.

By manifold word and act, in the very scenes in which we have all acted foolishly and weakly, He walks before us, saying what no wisdom can amend and doing what no purity may reprove. The life, of

which the world has no standard but that life itself, and no ideal according to which it might create one, is its own evidence. Nothing but His own teaching can expound it. It is not merely a life without faults upon which the finger may be placed. It is a life in just such perspective as all His presentation of the beauty of purity and goodness require. It has the right relations with God and man which He sets forth. Evil, as His teaching required, has no affinity with any impulse of His nature. His views of life are of such absolute confidence in God's wisdom and love that sin can awake in Him no murmur of rebellion. He makes no use of the world that might border on temptation. Above all, the simplicity with which He accepts the Divine will is a continual testimony to His assurance that He came to reveal the Father.

Such a Teacher can never stand in opposition to the authority which is within the soul. He is never found declaring that this is the truth because He sees it, but only because, if we would, we too may see it. As an authority He quoted Himself. If He was the Truth, not in word only but in all His work and all His thought, there could be no higher authority to quote. Yet His "I say unto you" did not end inquiry, but begin it. Hear something, it said, which the humble heart will recognize as true, and which the experience of obedience will confirm. And surely herein is the weightiest proof of the perfect truth. It does not dominate and silence the inward voices, but awakes them and makes them its

chief witness. Thus it abolishes all opposition between what God has created in us and what He reveals to us, between the authority of the conscience and the heart and the authority of the truth. To accept Christ as teacher is not to be subjugated to the dominion of absolute truth which is not to be investigated or criticized. It is to receive intellectual emancipation, by being convinced only by the perfection which can bear all investigation, and which is received because it is seen to be true, and cherished because it is found to be love. The highest proof of God's revelation is thus that it sets men free with the liberty of the children of God.

CHAPTER V

THE SAVIOUR

Revelation of God's will and help in fulfilling it. Annihilating touch of Omnipotence. Salvation by proclamation and salvation by participation. Might of constraint or might of love. Abolition of opposition between the authority without and the authority within.

THE revelation of God, as it is manifested in meekness and lowliness, is an appeal of the truth to the spiritual in man, by which man's imperfect insight is not blinded but enlightened. Then he would be free indeed did he always walk in it. But the sole hindrance to his freedom is not ignorance, nor any opposition between the imperfect insight of his own spirit and the perfect revelation of God's will. Even when he knows to do good he does not do it, and sin in him is not ignorance, but, as the Apostle has well defined it, "resisting the truth in unrighteousness." Wherefore the Divine succour must do more than cope with his ignorance. It must also cope with his weakness, and this needs a large deliverance, for he is weak through the shadow of guilt, and the hesitation of failure, and the tyranny of habit, and the bias of the will.

Yet this deliverance, which seems on first thoughts to be a task easy for Omnipotence, is what mere Omnipotence cannot provide. If it is difficult for

Omniscience to come from behind the veil of darkness which surrounds it, to teach man without destroying his own insight, how difficult must it be for Omnipotence to aid man without overwhelming him. How can the touch of Omnipotence be anything but annihilating for the finite will? To aid man were easy, but to aid man so as not to destroy his freedom, but to perfect it, is a task requiring all the manifold wisdom of God. The more we ponder it, the more the difficulty of it appears: for the greater the preponderance of the will that aids, the more destructive it must be for the will that is aided. Hence a salvation which at once gives man the Divine help and sets him in his true freedom, bears its own testimony to being a manifestation of the Infinite Wisdom.

For many this problem has no existence. They are impatient of the suggestion that any device of wisdom is needed. They cannot see why there should not be at once salvation by might. Why should it not be announced from the throne of God, backed by a display of power to convince the most sceptical and to overwhelm the most obdurate, that there is pardon for the penitent, deliverance for the captive, and help for the weak.

Then man's fruitless struggles would be ended, and his deliverance would be sure. Yet, by a way so direct, even a man cannot aid his fellow without taking from him a more precious thing than he gives. Help thus condescendingly offered from on high, help that costs no sacrifice and calls forth no

sympathy, too often only completes the degradation of the person it aids ; and, the more abundant and easy the liberality, the greater the danger. Only one perfect kind of giving and receiving is found among men, only one that helps the receiver to his true inheritance of good, only one that is all blessing and no degradation, only one that helps to independence and to freedom. This is the giving and receiving in the perfect identity of interest and affection of parent and child.

If, then, human help, to be of profit, must be help of participation, how much more is it necessary that God's help should be ? But how shall the Almighty, Who has all things and can know no want, Who has all power and can know no struggle, Who is of absolute holiness and can have no contact with the guilt and weakness of sin, participate in the struggle of man, seeing man only knows goodness as it denies itself to be able to give, and justice as it endures loss to do right, and love as it forgets its own need to help another ? The answer is found in One Who only deals with us as the Son of God in so far as He is perfectly the Son of Man. Not from the throne of Omnipotence, but in the midst of the struggle of earth, He offers Himself to every soul however unadvanced upon the road towards God—if only he is looking in the right direction—to be the lofty end of his lowly beginnings, the steadfast goal of his wavering aims, the large perfection of which his limited nature dimly prophesies. And this succour He offers, not with the annihilating touch

of the omnipotence of power, but with the quickening touch of the omnipotence of Love.

This omnipotence is shown only in the completeness of the service. He Who was rich, for our sakes becomes poor. He partakes of our life in everything but its short-coming. He endures all trial, faces all temptation and undergoes all discouragement; and the only difference is that He shows none of the hesitation which follows even one defeat, and none of the compromise which follows the harbouring of any evil thought. Finally, He faces man's darkest and most inevitable destiny in its greatest agony and blackest ignominy. Love could do no more to show that it would do everything for man, everything except corrupt his will and replace his freedom, and so deprive him of his best heritage. To help him to attain to the perfect freedom of the children of God, it would employ all the resources of wisdom for him.

By the cross Christ has abolished the enmity between man and God, not merely by removing some outward causes of alienation, but by the demonstration of the succour which has nothing of the might which constrains, but is all of the might which persuades, nothing of the easy proclamation of power, but is all of the difficult participation of love. By it man attains to his true freedom, to a freedom which is not compelled even by holiness, but a freedom which is the perfect harmony of the finite human will with the Will that governs all things. By it we are saved into our true inheritance, which is glad

acceptance of the place God has assigned to us, and glad obedience to the guidance He has provided for us. Then, and then only, will all opposition between the authority without and the authority within be utterly abolished.

CHAPTER VI

THE BLESSING OF SIMON

Not revealed by flesh and blood. Blessed be sight. The power to open and shut. Human fallibility and the Divine certainties.

IN the first confession of Him as the Christ, the Son of the living God, we see what kind of recognition Jesus requires. Simon was blessed, not because he had made the confession. The confession had been made before, and not accepted. Not the confession itself, but the manner of it gained our Lord's approval. Simon was blessed because it was revealed to him not by flesh or blood, but by the Father in Heaven. Not even from Jesus Himself had he learned it. Jesus did not profess the part of the Christ of God, but lived it. In humble, patient contact with life, all He was and said and did spoke to Simon of life's true importance and deepest need. The effect was a conviction, built up of a thousand impressions, that to see Him was to see the Father. By lowly roads the disciple was led to the heights where the word of the Father in his heart called forth the confession of the Son in the world. "Through the gorge that gives the stars at midday clear," through meekness and lowliness of heart, through the fellowship of the poor and the sad, Peter followed his Lord, and, as he went, he saw above him the

lights of heaven hidden from men struggling for prominence out in the glaring day. Then he needed no further help or guidance, for the commonest incidents in life, the commonest wayside scenes, the daily intercourse with the obscurest of the sons of men cried aloud to him, "This is my beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased."

And God's Christ can still only be fully confessed in the same way. He must be a discovery and not be accepted as a mere echo of a human declaration. He must be recognized as the complement of the nature God has given us, as the satisfaction of the aspirations He has awakened in us, as the response to the call of conscience and the voices of the heart. He might even be His own witness, and men might wander with Him by lake and mountain and hear Him speak in the crowd to men by day and pray to His Father themselves alone with Him in the night, and yet He might be to them at most as one of the prophets. But, when the Divine Word speaks in the heart and men are made to see that this is God's goal in all their striving, they are enabled to say with practical, transfiguring conviction, "This is the Christ."

In the confession of Him, thus revealed by the Father, Jesus had the joy of finding the first sure evidence of spiritual vision in His disciples. It was like a child blinking at the sun. "Blessed be sight," the mother exclaims, "thou too wilt be a man, and march right forward, shunning danger, but not swerving from duty": and no awkwardness of hand

or limb, no tumbling into fire or water, can ever bring her into doubt of the certain guidance assured in the glorious gift. And with a like confidence Jesus exclaims, "I say unto thee, thou art Peter." "Thou man of impulse, thou art now a man of insight, and the shifting sands are turned to rock and become a foundation to bear a Church against which the gates of the grave and dark oblivion, which close on all else, shall not prevail. Henceforward, however great and manifold be thy errors, thou art in the way of opening that no man may shut, and shutting that no man may open."

With how much human limitation and even error the Divine certainties may be consistent, Peter's life seems designed to show. His very first act, in his new character of the rock on which the Church is to be built, is of a spirit which our Lord rebukes as of the Great Enemy. Days only have passed, and the man of rock is found denying his Master with oaths and curses at the idle scoff of a serving-maid. Years pass and he can still be confused in thought and in action by a few troublers of the Church whose bigotry was the measure of their persistence. Finally, though he crowned his life with a martyr's death, it was not, judging by our Lord's description as "being carried whither he would not," with a martyr's exultation. Yet, through it all, the authority to open and shut is not withdrawn or even called into question.

By what fitness then is Peter described as a rock, or in what way is he blessed to open that none may

shut and shut that none may open? Was he not a strangely mixed and inconsistent character for so responsible a charge? Is not the answer that the ultimate Divine certainties of life depend, not on being always right or even always consistent, but on the possession of the insight which recognizes the Christ, not once, but always, not in the past only, but as He still walks among men? Does it not ultimately depend upon the answer that can be given to the great question, "Lovest thou Me?" In all Peter's wilful youth, when he had the strong self-reliance which a sense of infallibility confers, when he marched with equal temerity into the first confession of his Lord and the first rebuke of Him, into the resolution to die with Him and the haste to deny Him, the question admitted of only a dubious and tearful answer, and it was never clear, in consequence, how far he followed only what was revealed by the Father in Heaven, and how far his last ground of judgment was of flesh and blood. But when he learned to stretch forth his hands while another girded him and carried him whither he would not, thus dying daily to self-will, his hesitation in all other matters only makes more evident the certainty with which he answers the great question. Then, by the sole guidance of love to a Lord whose truth and grace he had not been told of but had seen, he opened and none shut and shut and none opened, and loosed and none bound and bound and none loosed.

And what he opens no man may shut, not because

what he decides God will sustain, be the judgment right or wrong, but because he approves what God approves and condemns what God condemns ; and however great be the seeming contradiction of facts, he may calmly wait the final award. That he should be saved from doubt and hesitation and great mental conflict was not assured him. On the great question of the age his decision seemed to tremble long in the balance. He loved his nation, yet, contrary to all his hopes, he saw her hostility to the faith increase. As first of mortal men he honoured her rulers, yet to obey God he disobeyed them. The worship of his people he had cherished with the reverence of a lifetime, but he learned to know that it must pass away. Before he could so judge, he had to be reasoned with at Jerusalem and rebuked at Antioch. But it was not Paul's rebuke which reproved him. It was the recognition in it of the Lord's. To walk of his own insight and free impulse might be long impossible, but the loyally submissive man determined no less securely according to truth and right because he had doubts and fears. In the end, he found his way with no less certainty, through the perplexities of a restless and troubled age, for seeing the Master's footsteps only a step at a time. His slowness may even have been an equipment for reconciling his brethren to the growing doctrine, enlarging enterprise and freer ceremonial of the expanding Church. It assured that no step should be taken on the ground of mere theory or abstract inference from any previous teaching even of the

Master, but that the appeal should be continuously to the spiritual insight to which the Master exclusively addressed Himself. Then he truly professed his Lord, not merely as One Who had uttered wise sayings and lived a beautiful life, but as the supreme guide in all spiritual perplexities and as the supreme helper in all spiritual conflicts.

CHAPTER VII

THE FOUNDING OF THE CHURCH

A foundation of certainty. A Church to transmit. To witness.
To interpret and apply.

ON the foundation of Peter and similar faithful souls our Lord actually built His Church. They were men who questioned, yet ever went with their faces forward. Their many hesitations only made it more certain that the foundation of their character was not hesitation, but a certainty which was prepared to sacrifice every possession, and, what men cherish more than possession, every prejudice, and, what is dearest of all, life itself. Their gravest errors only proved their adherence to truth and right. Even the weakness of their humanity only showed how essentially their might was in God. To man a foundation so human and fallible might seem altogether inadequate for a Church against which nothing can prevail ; but Christ trusted to it exclusively. His whole work He committed to this Church, and He neither sought any support for His truth outside the Church, nor any other support for the Church beyond the insight and faithfulness of the souls that love Him.

To this Church He gave the task of transmitting His teaching and depicting His life. In an age which depended largely upon writing, amid a people

who esteemed above all things the written word, with the idea of a sacred writing ever before His mind, He yet wrote no word of His own. The omission is the more notable for the exalted terms in which he spoke of the permanence of all He said. In refraining, therefore, from giving this form of endurance to His teaching, He must have had a deliberate purpose. It shows what kind of authority He desired for it, and what kind He did not desire. Instead of giving it a final written form, which would have secured a full and precise account capable of accurate transmission, He addressed Himself to the few who partially understood Him, leaving, doubtless, many a precious word to be forgotten, and perhaps many a gracious action to be misinterpreted. If it had been His first purpose to set all dubiety for ever aside, He might have made every word be continued to man as a royal proclamation, with an imperative authority behind it which none might doubt and few disobey. But this enslaving authority over man's mind and will He ever shunned; and to find a reason why He put no word into writing, we only need to recall how He dealt with the men among whom He lived.

The danger He would guard against is the old danger. It is man's readiness to consent to the form, and deny the substance. Written words might not have been the banner of conquering souls, but an ensign on the bosom of the dishonourably dead. With ever deepening lack of understanding, they might have been repeated as a code of salvation.

Then the Messiah would have been changed into the great Rabbi. The end of such a security of literal infallibility would have been to set up a merely external authority, to which men would have conformed their words but not their thoughts, their deeds but not their hearts. Then, instead of the Gospel being the mightiest appeal to the spiritual nature of man to call him to his heritage of freedom, the very might of the absolute Divine authority would have precluded the human response necessary for understanding and accepting and applying. Wherefore, He commits His word exclusively to spiritual men. Nothing has come down to us that has not come through this spiritual channel. Much may have been lost, possibly much misunderstood, but, to this day, no word of Jesus that remains is easily forgotten or easily turned to commonplace, or easily added to the stock of religious platitude, or easily made in any way the subject of barren repetition.

It has, however, often been argued that this very guarantee of a literal and absolute transmission of the truth, which we are supposing Christ to have omitted, was assured by the promise given to the disciples of a special endowment of the Holy Spirit. Did not Jesus Himself say that the Holy Ghost would bring all things to their remembrance, whatsoever He had told them? And what was this promise, if not an assurance of verbal accuracy in report? And how should such transmission be received, if not with implicit belief and unquestioning obedience?

The very simple answer is that the promise of the Spirit's aid is an assurance, not of an infallible, but of a living transmission. By it the words of Christ have lived on in the practical life of the Church, a spiritual possession cherished by spiritual men. Had this not been the purpose, and the promise been for securing merely verbal accuracy, Jesus only took a circuitous way of doing by His followers what He could have done with far more certainty with His own hand. Nay, if this manner of external guarantee is the best assurance, would He not then have been doing only what God Himself might and ought to have done from the beginning of creation? If this form of infallible authority is imperative for our belief, alone satisfactory to man and worthy of God, why was it so conspicuously absent through so many ages?

In practical experience, this Church founded on the souls who have a sure instinct for the true and spiritual, has transmitted the record in a form which makes it more memorable, more vital, more a familiar guide and friend than any proclamation, however guaranteed, could have effected. And the Church which transmits the truth also testifies to it. With external infallibilities we cannot deal without depending upon inquiries for which the qualification is intellectual, not religious. But the Church which Christ founded upon the insight and fidelity of those who confessed Him, not because of what man had told them but because of what God had revealed to them, was a living demonstration of the fulness of

His truth and the might of His salvation. Founded on this insight and fidelity, it was a Church and not a party, with wide portals of truth unbarricaded by sectarian watchwords, with spacious halls of love to the kindly shelter of which a sense of need was ample passport, where, in prophecy of a still higher temple, not merely Lazarus the Jewish beggar but Onesimus the Gentile slave lay in Abraham's bosom. To this Church might well be committed the task, not only of transmitting the truth, but of being the highest witness to the power of her Head, for she had too urgent and present need of His deliverance ever to misrepresent it or make light of it.

To a Church so founded, moreover, may be committed the task, not only of transmitting and testifying, but of interpreting and applying. From human errors she was not free. Yet, holding her belief in her Lord, not as an externally supported tradition which ever turned her thoughts to the past to the neglect of the present, but with an insight which was of God's revealing and not of man's repeating, she went out with His work and His teaching into the great world of perplexed, struggling, sinful men, and tested them as the way for all men unto the Kingdom of God. Hence her earliest work was not to record but to interpret, and the Gospels were not written till, a generation having arisen who had not known Him, the spiritual needs of the Church required it. Then she could tell of Him with a present and urgent interest to living men, not merely as the accuracy of history might have

dictated, but as fidelity to the Master's mission demanded. Thus she realized the promise that the Spirit would teach men all things, and bring all things to their remembrance, not merely to be recorded, but to be lived.

CHAPTER VIII

APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION

The Peter of the blessing. Rome. Canterbury. The Gram-pians. The basis of men's arguments and the ground of their trust. Proof near and practical.

THE question now is, Who has succeeded to Peter's blessing and is in possession of Peter's power? We see him, after receiving the power of the keys, with the largest authority ever conferred on mortal man, in his fisherman's cottage by the Galilean Lake. He sits in a chair of the plainest wood that could keep him from the ground, unpolished except by long friction from the arm on which he leans his rugged, thoughtful forehead, if indeed his household resources boast a chair at all. His fisherman's coat, excellent against cold, is unimpressive as a robe of office. Being a careful man, he even takes it off, and, as so many of his class do still, sits down in his shirt-sleeves or their ancient equivalent. There he sits, the shoulders rounded from the mass of sinews which the oar develops, the bony fingers scarred with hooks and fish-gills, the complexion tanned by the weather, and lines of thought crows-footing over a face, grave with meditation on the ways of God, and shrewd with meditation on the ways of those creatures, incalculable as the element in which they move, on which God has made his

livelihood depend. Thus we must see him, if we would discover how he wore so high a dignity and wielded so absolute an authority.

After his chair has been made of all kinds of precious material, and raised on a daïs and surmounted by a canopy, and after his coat has been so improved in cut and material as to be called a cope, and his tawny beard been shaven as an impiety, and the lines of his face smoothed out by the fair dignity of office, what the matter gains in human probability, it so loses in Divine sanction, that it is not strange, after a transformation so vast, that difficulty should arise regarding his identity.

Is he now sitting on the throne of the Cæsars, elected with much intrigue by the princes of the Church, the supreme object of reverence in stately processions, over-arched by earth's vastest dome, which is called by his name, the president of the Church's Councils, having all his official decrees endowed with an infallibility, of which, good man, he had less than the common share while on earth? No doubt he is a true successor, but it is hard to recognize him till we see him as a frail old man, weary of presiding at councils and of heading processions, and done with formulating infallible decrees, sitting in utter simplicity, untouched by the grandeur around, feeling his own weakness and casting himself upon his God, and, as a sinner, approaching his Saviour and, with much doubt of his own wisdom, asking, like other men of uncertain judgment, the Spirit's guidance. Are we wrong in thinking that,

the farther he is from his infallibility and his sovereignty, the more he feels his human imperfection and frailty, the truer successor he is to the impulsive, erring, but loyal-hearted apostle, and that, as God judges, the stronger he is as a rock on which to build a Church?

Many believe he can be more clearly recognized at Canterbury. Once he thought it imperative to listen to God first, and the magistrate afterwards. Now, being better instructed in custom and reasons of State, he recognizes that the magistrate's decree comes more conveniently first, and the supplication for God to direct afterwards. Once, too, he was rather ashamed of his country and his mother-tongue. Now he is the proud spiritual head of a prosperous nation that esteems itself second to none upon earth. As becomes the representative of a nation whose merchants are princes and whose traffickers are the honourable of the earth, he is arrayed in silk and fine linen. His throne is in an ancient and stately edifice, a visible proof of his long-descended and noble heritage, and he lives in a palace and is the companion of peers. Thus transformed he may be difficult to recognize. But alone, after Parliaments are ended and functions at cathedrals brought to their solemn close, and with his silk vestments and lawn sleeves given into the feminine keeping which more becomes them, in the strong rugged face of a toiler it is easier to recognize the features of the Galilean fisherman. When he wearies of state and doubts the efficacy of decrees, and bears heavily

upon his heart the difficulties of the Church and the evils of his country ; when he would gladly unite with any fellow Christian, could any help be compassed ; when he rubs shoulders with grimy men and feels himself a man with a great sympathy with men and is perplexed by his position and the irreconcilable forces around him ; when the great longing of his heart is to do justly and love mercy and walk humbly with his God, who more closely resembles the Apostle, who had his doubts about the common and the unclean, yet went nevertheless with the messengers of the alien, and who sought peace by eating with the Gentile, then feared he had blundered, and finally permitted himself to be corrected once more into a larger fellowship ? Then, as things are reckoned in a greater realm than Britain, he is a strong rock on which to build the one Church which is to be bound together in truth and the spirit of love.

To others, it appears that, driven by the general laxity of belief, he has resumed an accent that bewrays and has gone back to the north from which he came, and now lives exclusively behind the rampart of the Grampians. Instructed by a purified tradition on the one hand, and the perfect harmony of his system of Christian doctrine on the other, he maintains inviolate the whole edifice of the faith, the examining of a brick being as the uprooting of the foundations. At all times he has the heat of Celtic fire in his voice, but, when he maintains the infallibility and unity of the inspired word and the

almost equally inspired interpretation of it, there is a roar of Celtic conflagration. No human being could live in a loftier palace of infallibility. Yet he seems to be too often in the garden lopping ears, and to have more of the son of thunder and less of the son of consolation than Peter of old. But, when a wiry, bent figure, with long white hair streaming in the fierce wind, struggles across the wide, bleak moorland to the low thatched cottage of some shepherd who lives in more than patriarchal aloofness, and enters there to feed the flock of God, and pleads with the young who are standing at life's portal, and consoles the aged who are nearing the portals of another life, and forgets all about the integral system of Christian doctrine and the organic scheme of salvation, and his voice trembles with an emotion which once moved him to tears as he heard the question he now urges, "Lovest thou Me?" there never was any more certain representative of the Apostle in all the world, never any stronger rock on which to build a Church.

This succession, not of office, but of insight and of love, has also this further proof on its behalf. Not merely does it relate Peter's successors more certainly to himself, but, further, it is the actual foundation upon which the Church in all ages has been truly built. The basis of men's arguments and the real ground of their trust are seldom identical. Apostolic succession by a series of officials plays a much more important part in polemics than in life. The true succession of the Church has been in those to whom,

not flesh or blood, but the Father in Heaven has spoken. Apostolic succession, by the transmission of lofty faith and lowly reverence through the humble channels of the believing and the reverent, has no flaws, no breaks, no violent alterations, and needs no historical treatises in its defence, but carries us back with certainty to the Apostle, not of the ecclesiastical painting and the stained glass window, but to the Apostle of the boat and the Upper Room. Upon this longer and more certain succession, faith and all the graces of the Christian life are in all Churches daily built. Not by ecclesiastical vision of priest or presbyter have men in any section of the Church entered into the faith of Christ, but by the ministry of humble teaching and the example of patient lives. The history which has been written in books has its uses, which would be greater were the study of it less dogmatic and more open-minded. But the history which has been effective in calling forth faith and love and new obedience was written on the fleshly tables of human hearts. The continuous presence of the Spirit would be but inadequately proved by continuous succession to the chief seats in the Church. To fill them after some fashion never has caused any difficulty, and the choice has not always reflected credit on human, much less on Divine selection. But the continuous presence of the Spirit has never been without the surer evidence of the spiritual gifts which have adorned the lives of the humble and faithful souls, who, throughout all the centuries, have been the salt of the earth, and without

whose influence the Church would only have been the most corrupt of human institutions.

Thus the same channel which first received the truth has transmitted it, displaying it by the same evidence with which it first convinced a hostile world, which was not the high placed among men and the stately and decorous among things, but a life and teaching which appealed all the more effectively to man's conscience that it was in no position to appeal to anything else in man. The things seen and temporal, ecclesiastical as well as secular, have ever been of sufficient prominence, with a very inadequate accompaniment of blessing ; the things unseen and eternal have continued in much obscurity, but, in the wastest places of the earth, have brought large and gracious benefits.

Would we know the certainty of the Apostolic succession, the way lies straight before us. We are not in need of argument high and abstract, but of proof near and practical. This succession is found in those who correspond with the old description, " We toil, working with our hands ; being reviled, we bless ; being persecuted, we endure ; being defamed, we entreat." There never came a time when any one could be a true successor of any apostle and say, " Being held in awe, we ban ; being persecutors, we overcome endurance ; being exalted, we command." In all stations, both in the Church and in the world, their successors have been faithful toilers, not a few of them working with their hands. The truest of them have most met scorn and opposition and

detraction, and have met them with blessing and patience and entreaty. Yet, meeting them with strength and not with weakness, they bound and none loosed, and opened and none shut. And this loftiest authority is to be inherited, not by rite or ceremony, but by penitence and faith and humility. All souls possessed of their spirits stand in an assured succession, their lofty faith and lowly reverence having descended through the inspired and the lowly, a sure and unbroken and effective transmission of a self-revealing gift of the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER IX

THE UNIT OF FELLOWSHIP

Begin with Christ's beginning. Two or three met in Christ's name. Transforms the old order. Finds the only bond that is of God. Existence of errors and evil. The promise of the future.

THE foundation of the Church, as we have seen, consists of those who first named the name of Christ with Peter's insight into what it means : and the materials of the building must be the same as the foundation. What the nature of this building is, we now proceed to inquire.

We must begin as far back as our Lord did. All His beginnings are with individuals. The only condition of acceptance is to worship in spirit and in truth. One person in his heart worships God, and to this no increase of numbers, no consecrated building or large assembly can add anything. For our own assurance in this approach, the revelation of the Father testifying to the Son, and the revelation of the Son witnessing to the Father are the adequate grounds. A humble heart lifted anywhere in the name of Christ meets with God, and enjoys the fellowship from which all other fellowship should proceed.

Yet the Church of Christ has not begun to be formed till two have met in Christ's name, till, in this simplest act of association, the spirit of fellowship

that is in Him has found expression ; nor has it rightly come into being till the two have become the three, till the spirit of love that is in Him has begun to enlarge its sphere of blessing. Then, however, the Church has been adequately constituted, and any enlargement up to the Church Universal can be only an expansion of this primary fellowship. As the two or three, met in one family in the name of kinship, are the unit of social life, having, in germ and power, all social possibilities, so the two or three, met in one company in the name of Christ, compose the unit of spiritual association. This company has in germ and power, all religious possibilities. It is already the microcosm, wherein the great and complete Church, which is in heaven as well as earth, is mirrored. It is an atom, but an atom which holds in potentiality the glory of a universe.

The reason of this great power and promise is found in the nature of the fellowship as constituted in the name of Christ. It is thereby made a new social order, because to meet in the name of Christ is not merely to baptize and rename the old order, but is to transform and reconstitute it. The old order meets in the name of a ruler whose task is to suppress difference by external authority. He has subjects as they submit themselves to this authority. If he be a true ruler, he is also a reformer, anxious to perfect the authority he exercises as well as to maintain it. Yet he can only appeal at best to a wiser self-love, which cannot go beyond the common fear or the common interest. In the last resort, no political

state can be more than a compromise of convictions and of interests. In the same way, were Christ only a ruler and at most a reformer, the proof of His success would be His ability to suppress outward differences and to harmonize opposing influences, and, by appealing to a wiser self-love in man, to maintain unity through a more adequate self-suppression.

Many still seem to see in Christ no higher bond of fellowship. Unity of organization seems to them so important that they demand for it, in Christ's name, the surrender of all men's distinctive convictions and most cherished interests. The more a Church conforms to the idea of a State the more it seems to them to bear the name of Christ. But, even were such a Church in actual dominion universal, it would in no way manifest the characteristics which distinguish the assembly of the two or three. This assembly, however small, unites the largest freedom with the closest fellowship, whereas this Church Universal of imposed creed independent of individual conviction, would suppress freedom and not obtain fellowship. Only when the members were too little in earnest to disagree would there be so much as a semblance of freedom: and even in this society of disciplined latitudinarians, upon which no controversy could intrude because a charitable politeness allowed every possible difference of opinion, the old order would reappear full of the old worldly distinctions, especially of intellectual superiority, which set men far farther apart than differences of opinion or even of practice.

But to meet in the name of Christ is not to meet in the name of a Ruler or even of a Reformer. It is to meet in the name of a Regenerator, of a Saviour. In other words, its bond of union is not self-love, but love. Now this bond is not of compromise, but is in the nature of things and of the appointment of God ; and is not a mere amalgamation of differences, but a true association of them. The strongest individuality is no bar to union, for, in this fundamental, this Divinely constituted order, freedom and harmony are inseparable. Where the bond is love and not self-love, men can meet on the loftiest grounds of personal as well as corporate conviction, and of personal as well as corporate variety of enterprise, yet with the widest freedom and the fullest harmony. Fellowship is no longer a compromise of convictions and interests, but is an assurance that all opinions can be perfected into the truth, and all interests harmonized into the Kingdom of God.

This bond which is not of compromise, but of God's nature and the constitution of things, is assured by meeting in the name of a Regenerator, by whose power the smallest company may become a regenerating force, with both the faith and the love to embrace the world in its final hopes. Then the power of enlarging the fellowship without endangering the harmony has been won, and a Church has been formed, not a Club, because perfect freedom has joined hands with perfect fellowship.

That no earthly society—perhaps not even the two or three—has ever met exclusively in Christ's name,

may be true. To meet in Christ's name is to trust only in the union of personal insight and personal consecration. It may be that there is no society which is not largely upheld by custom, formalism and pride of office, and which is not endangered in consequence by injured pride, wilfulness, obstinacy, thwarted ambition. But the presence of these evils no more destroys any reality of true fellowship in Christ's name found beneath them, than the presence of Judas at the Last Supper unsanctified the disciples or excluded the Master.

Yet the true Church is not an amalgam of Christ and the world, but exists in despite of its defects, and is really constituted by the fellowship of the few for whom the name of Christ represents all their desire and all their trust. Had even two or three met who excluded all else from their assembly, the true Church would have been an actuality, and not, as it still is, an ideal amid endless variety of approximation. As it is, the Church, as she now exists, has within her many causes of division. The bond is largely of worldly compromise, and is endangered by every change of circumstances or balance of advantage. When this threatens chaos, men imagine that they should strengthen the old bond and set up again the old order, ignorant of the fact that it is impossible to retrace the steps, and that, when division arises, there is only one way of healing it, which is to set the face forward, assured of meeting again nearer the final goal.

The supreme task of the Church is not to maintain

an outward semblance of unity, but rather to maintain a Christlike discontent with every bond of fellowship which comes short of His. As long as there is aught of constraint, of custom, of self-interest, of timidity in the fellowship of the Church, she is not wholly met in Christ's name. His name stands for the appeal of the perfect truth and for the aid of Omnipotence, which do not suppress, but set free. It is the name in which the ultimate might is not power, but love. And the fellowship of the Church is a fellowship of the redeemed, who have been saved out of all forms of self-love into love, by the endless might and wisdom of the Love Divine. This love, being the final dissolution of opposition between God's truth without and man's thoughts within, between God's will without and man's purposes within, assures the perfect union of all who are saved into it. This is the fellowship which has in it the promise of the future. The present results, by which, in a haste compelled by our fleeting years, we are ever apt to judge, may be small, but eternity makes little of result in comparison with tendency. Magnitude of result is undoubtedly with the Church which has bulk and skilful leadership and temporal advantages, but the promise of the future is for the Church which approximates most closely to the ideal of the many or the few who are truly met in the name of One who unites men, not by enslaving them to His will, but by setting them free with the liberty of the children of God. Our duty, therefore, in our present divided state, is not to endeavour to repair

the old bonds, not to seek any working compromise of creed or conviction, but rather to labour to cast out all that is of bondage, for the sake of a fellowship which is established in the perfect harmony of the souls Christ has set free.

CHAPTER X

THE TRUE UNITY

The unit of fellowship and the final unity. Two kinds of unity.
Perfected into one. The uses of division. The bond.
Drawing near to the source.

THE unit of fellowship is the two met in the name of Christ, the two who have not suppressed their differences, but have found the power which can harmonize them, the two who have found a bond wholly consistent with freedom, and who represent the union of souls redeemed into love out of self-love. From its nature, therefore, it is at once comprehensive and expansive. It is capable of embracing all in true freedom. Nor is it merely capable. It ever labours to fulfil the task of truly making all one. The fellowship of the two, who have attained both unity and freedom in the spirit of love, has from its nature both the will and the power to become the three met in Christ's name. From its nature it is comprehensive and expansive, yet, nothing can satisfy it short of a perfect union, in the spirit of brotherhood and freedom, of all who name that name. This alone is the final unity of the Church ; and, in proportion as it is this fellowship, is any present form of it the catholic, the true.

Two kinds of unity exist. One is of the quarry, the other of the building. The former is retained

by disturbing nothing; the latter involves much upheaval. For the unity of the building, stones must be torn from their resting-place, cast down in heaps, patiently squared one by one, and then laboriously built according to rule and plan. The architect alone sees steadily, through all the seeming disorder, the stately building, harmonious in all its parts, which is to issue out of it. Yet it is enough that he knows, if only all the other workers will believe that he sees, and acknowledge that to perfect order before the last stone was laid would be failure. At this day there is no possibility of believing that the Church is the undisturbed uniformity of the quarry. Nor is it possible, at least with open eyes, to expect that she will ever again be. Our hope can only look towards the completed harmony of the building. Much lamentation over disunion is mere regret that we were not left in the "hole of the pit from which we were digged," and much ecclesiastical labour is merely an attempt to go back to it. But once this uniformity has been disturbed, we can no more either by coaxing or coercing get back to it, than we can replace quarried stones in the original strata.

Only one hope of ultimate unity remains to us, which is nothing less than to be perfected into one. This goal is very different from our hasty endeavours after uniformity. It would not even be brought nearer by a Church, which is one because it obeys one human authority and has obtained universal acceptance of its doctrines and can compel attendance on its ordinances. Still less would a union of all sects

by an acceptable distillation of all doctrines and a workable compound of all organizations, realize it. All sacrifices of liberty of conscience, of the right and the duty of inquiry, of zeal for righteousness, even to martyrdom if need be, only lead back to the uniformity of the quarry, and away from the true unity of the building. Uniformity instead of being union, has often been its bitterest foe, because no cause of division has wrought more disastrously than the suppression of right and natural development, or even of legitimate endeavour after it. A living Church, repressed in one course, must break out into others. Yet men still aim at the uniformity of compromise and regulation, and, when others do not agree with them, they wash their own hands in innocence, and piously dismiss the difference as schism. Shelters we must have, and we should make them as weather-tight as we can, and not multiply them more than we can help. But we should not mistake our special shelter for the final edifice or take the foreman's regulation about it to be the plan of the Architect.

In seeking this unity we may well be met by great perplexity. In a task so vast, it is surely not incredible that the plan may be God's affair, and only the squaring of the stones ours. Our best way of seeking it, in that case, is faithfully to follow the truth we see and do the tasks which lie to our hand. Yet, if this loftier goal of the Church's unity be steadfastly kept in view, it may not be impossible, even among causes of division which are plainly of human in-

firmity, such as intolerance on the one hand and impatience on the other, to recognize the finger of God. Without such separations, the dividing spirit might have had still greater dominion over man, and the hope of a true union, in the harmony of souls set free, been farther away. By our divisions we may even be nearer Him in Whose Father's house are many mansions, with rooms as well as room for all. Few things, at least, keep us farther apart than the violent demand for unity which turns narrowness into a virtue, which makes acuteness in discovering our brother to be an alien an evidence of religion, and which considers great stress laid on outward things the highest exercise of piety. As long as these merely external demands appropriate the name of Christ, much outward division may be needed to keep men from entirely forgetting the true unity. It may even be that, in God's wise government, still greater division is in store for us, until, through the sheer impossibility of believing in the one outward, visible Church founded on compromise and regulation, men may be driven to look for the inward, invisible Church, and be taught that they only seek unity as they walk in love. Then we may be able to achieve outward union, not as a substitute for the inward unity, but as its vehicle and its expression : or, it may be, we shall not need it.

Meantime in this matter also we must walk by faith and not by sight, and do our own tasks, not by large vision of the plan of eternity, but by concentration on the duty of the present. Yet, now that the plan

of eternity is the goal, we may condemn nothing in ignorance, and finish nothing in haste. When the body is in its first growth, the bones begin as specks of gristle. Were they all collected and pieced together into one, they would not form a shield so large or so strong or so handsome as the back of a tortoise. Outward unity they have none ; and were childish folly allowed to force them into it, how miserable were the result. But in their own places they have inward unity. By no other aid than the simple process of growth, joint is fitted to joint, till, when all has been perfected into one, the skeleton stands complete, with the balanced strength which bears easily the whole weight of the human frame. So in the Church there may be inward unity where no visible bond of union exists. It is I in them and Thou in Me, Christ in every member, and God in Christ. And, except in God's good time and way, the result may not be perfected for all our insistence. We only know that true union lies ever before and never behind, and that the man who enslaves either his own soul or his brother's is the true obstacle to its attainment. God alone is one. He alone sees life as a whole, calling things that are not as though they were. In His omniscient vision every detail has its place. That vision we cannot see, but our own place at least we may distinguish ; for, if we cannot see the whole as one, we nevertheless may know the bond which binds into one. God is love, and all His government is love. Wherefore, to find our place in the universal plan, we need only to walk in love.

Instead of seeking uniformity by regulating our conduct and our doctrine by our neighbour, we must seek it by ourselves walking according to the eternal rule of all unity, which is to follow the truth we see and do the duty before us in charity towards those who differ.

The Church has had too much of the unity of creed which rests on a compromise of convictions, and of the unity of action which rests on forbearance with evil. It is merely a state of unstable equilibrium, wherein nothing may be disturbed lest we discover how little we agree. Even hypocrisy may not be exposed, lest scandal and conflict arise. The end is delusion, and, in the day of trial which must inevitably come, division ; so that neither is unity maintained, nor are any of the ends forwarded which unity ought to serve. Instead of asking how many convictions may be obscured and how much imperfection tolerated, we ought rather to believe that the greatest champion of the true unity is the man who most ardently seeks truth and truth only and utterly, and who most uncompromisingly follows righteousness with entire consecration of aim and energy.

In the midst of the thicket it may seem a cause for thankfulness to be able to scramble out on any side. Yet it is not profitable to come out except on the side nearest home ; and were we always resolute to come out on the side nearest God, a division once overcome would be ended. Our roads would then converge as they approached the perfection of our Father in Heaven. Instead of wrangling over compromises,

men should concern themselves with drawing nearer to their fellows by drawing nearer to God. Division might still arise, but the deeper bond beneath all division would not be forgotten, and the great truth that, amid all the Churches, the one true Church is the Church of all the saints, would not be obscured. Then we should see that the true unity and the glorious liberty of the children of God are not in antagonism, but in absolute agreement ; and that, according as we approach that Divine goal, we shall leave behind us the forces which divide.

CHAPTER XI

THE METHOD OF FREEDOM

Organizing authority and regulative love. Knowledge and practical wisdom. Sincere and void of offence. The choice of the better way. Aim at an infinite. Vanquishing the practical difficulties of association.

ALL other governments proceed on the obvious fact that to do right is not always as clearly of advantage to ourselves as it is to our neighbour. But Jesus asks His Church to begin from a higher principle. He requires her to exercise patience, to suffer inconvenience, even to bear the pain of apparent failure, in order to organize not only the Church herself, but ultimately the world, on the plan of each man ruling himself, not on the plan of each man ruling his neighbour. This final order cannot be established by the most effective organizing authority. It demands the permeation of the whole by a regulative love. Patience, long enduring patience, it requires, patience not measured by human lives, but by the forbearance of Him with Whom a thousand years are as one day. But, if the task is long, while all else crumbles with time, even our imperfect human endeavours after this Divine goal have in them the promise of eternity.

The true method of freedom is found in Paul's prayer for his converts when they were passing

through the first and perhaps the greatest controversy which ever disturbed the Church. The very existence of Christianity as more than a Jewish sect was at stake. Every difference of nationality and religious observance, which could embitter the controversy, was present. As the Church was still in her infancy, outward division would have been specially calamitous. The assertion of any authority which could avert the evil was justifiable then, if it ever could be. Yet we find the Apostle who understood the danger best, not presuming to ask from his converts submission to his authority, nor demanding from them subjection in any form. He never even prays that a spirit of submission be granted them. His prayer is that they themselves should abound in knowledge and practical wisdom. Not by accepting the guidance even of the wisest and best, but by deeper insight into the great principles of truth, and by quicker and surer perception in their application, he would have men attain to discrimination: and by this alone he would establish the peace of the Church. He would have men, of their own insight and practical wisdom, discern the things that excel. This means that his trust is in the steady preference, not of the good to the bad—a choice seldom put before men, but of the better to the worse—a choice of every moment of life. By this means he expected men to continue at once sincere and void of offence, to combine, that is, entire devotion to truth with the fullest regard to conscientious difference.

So should unity be combined with freedom, the Church at once continuing in harmony and, through growing discernment, attaining to agreement in the fulness of the truth. This union in truth and love, unlike all unions through compromise, is not subject to fluctuation. It will continue and increase till the Day of Jesus Christ. Then, and then only, the dim perception that, amid all differences, we may be seeking one truth and one holiness, which is the only unity attainable for us in this life of struggle and conflict, will be transformed into the perfected vision and perfected realization of the Kingdom of God. Life being a hillside with many paths and no beaten way to the summit, the choice by which man advances is never a mere choice between the upward and the downward way, except perhaps at some great turning point in the life, but is ever a choice of the higher or the lower way. Downwards the paths diverge, and upwards they unite as they approach the summit. To arrive thither there is only one rule : we must steadfastly choose the upper path. At the great dividing of the ways there may be a choice between good and bad, but, afterwards, the choice is ever between good and better, or bad and worse. The only guarantee of steady progress is a growing discernment of the better. This is not of mere intellectual penetration, but of the discrimination of love. To be a sure guide, it must be the love which has discovered in the cross of Christ the key to life's meaning, and so to life's duties.

This choice of the things that excel is not confined

to matters religious. No part of life may be exempted without injury to the highest faculty of spiritual discernment, and no error is so trivial that it may not affect us in our highest endeavours. In business there is something more than the honourable ; there is also the more honourable way. In intercourse there is not only the friendly ; there is the friendlier bearing. In no part of life is it an adequate defence that we have not been in the wrong. The choice left us is seldom between a definite good and bad, but usually between a better and a worse thing to do, a better and a worse way of doing it, a better and a worse motive for doing it. And beyond the better ever lies a better still, so that the soul who steadily chooses what excels, looks up through every choice to the infinite perfection of God.

Nothing else suffices as a worthy aim in life. Above all, nothing else can suffice as the test of any method the Church of Christ may employ. The most finished order which was for her more than a mere mark to direct her on a journey far beyond itself, would be an evil and not a good. "He who aims at progress," says Emerson, "should aim at an infinite, not a special benefit. . . . The soul can be appeased not by a deed, but by a tendency." And the Church should not be the one exception to the rule, as if her existence were a good in itself, but should be the supreme embodiment of this aim at an infinite benefit. Have we not to say of much of the good the Church has sought what Emerson says of the purblind efforts after immediate reforms ?

“ The reforms whose fame now fills the land with temperance, anti-slavery, non-resistance, no-government, equal labour, fair and generous as each appears, are but poor bitter things when prosecuted for themselves as an end.” How many of our best human endeavours have in this way become “ poor bitter things,” but what has been poorer and bitterer than this zeal for church organizations which sets up a nearer goal than the Kingdom of God? Instead of drawing nearer to understanding and agreement as they approach the summit, men stand recriminating at the end of lost bye-roads. And, even where the more excellent way has been chosen, where the organization has been regarded only as a means to the infinite end of God’s truth and holiness, the poorer, less charitable way of following it has too often been chosen, and the poorer, more worldly, more material, more conspicuous, more ambitious motive been put in the fore-front. The faith which would cast itself wholly upon insight and practical wisdom, and plead for their exercise, and endure the inconvenience of their slow growth, has seemed to be too slow; and every other way of reaching unity has been offered for men’s acceptance, as a shorter road.

But what we bind on earth in any other fashion than in truth and freedom, is not bound in heaven. The practical difficulties of association, in spite of fierce tearing at them, remain insoluble. The largest, compactest, mightiest organization which is united only by visible external authority, and has

not its unity from love and insight within, belongs, however it may endure, to the temporal things which rise and decay. The only eternal bond is the love which grows in grasp of principle and sureness of insight, and is not content to judge the method of the Church of Christ by any lower standard than Christ Himself.

To obtain this final triumph, we must be content to forego many lesser, more immediate successes. We must accept no lower triumph than the Kingdom of God, and seek it by no hastier method than the patience of love. The Church hitherto has endeavoured to combine the method of the world with the method of Christ, and too often she has had the legitimate success of neither. She must make her choice between them, for the two methods are incompatible, and Christ's method of freedom departs as the world's method of compulsion enters. Either her prayer for her members must be that their awe should increase in submission, or that their love should increase in knowledge and practical discernment. She must make her choice, and by her choice she determines with which authority she would be clothed.

CHAPTER XII

THE END TO BE SERVED

The purpose served by the Church's unity. How it is not served.
The need for outward divisions. Confidence in the flesh.
The true comprehensiveness.

THE visible Church, not being a final end, but only a limited means for an infinite end, the kind of unity to be desired in her must be determined by no immediate advantage, but must be what is best fitted to serve the final good. Few mistakes have misled men more than the belief that the unity of the Church should be sought for the Church's own sake, and that, therefore, any method of worldly policy was justified which increased her power or averted immediate danger. But even the absolute and perfect unity is only offered by our Lord as a means to an unlimited end. The imperative reason why His disciples should be one was that the world might know. Their unity failed unless it was a demonstration both of Christ and Christianity. The Church serves not herself, but the Kingdom of God; and the Kingdom of God is not only wider than the Church, but wider, it may be, than the human race. For this reason, however limited be the visible embodiment of the Church, her heart should not be narrower than the widest hope. If truly met in Christ's name, the smallest assembly of the two or

three is a prophecy of God's largest purpose. Out of the smallest window a man may see to the far horizon, and the smallest gathering met in Christ's name has its window open towards heaven. Compared with this wide vision, the prospect in the largest room is small when the windows are opaque. And this can happen to the vastest organization. It may become self-absorbed, and find an adequate aim within its own borders, and have no wide vision of God's Kingdom.

Yet, the supreme failure would be to grow indifferent to all unity. The worst disloyalty to our hope is to be satisfied with separation, to say, Our problems are within our own borders, and we have no responsibility for other assemblies; let them teach truth or error and support righteousness or evil as it pleases them, for our tasks begin and end with ourselves. This is a state of mind even more disloyal to our Lord's purpose than that which says, in the hastiest, least charitable mood, we are the true Church. It is the supreme failure, for it is an abandonment of all endeavour after the unity which is to convince the world: and there can be no abandonment of a purpose so utter as total blindness to its claims. For no accumulation of error regarding the method may we turn aside from the task of seeking unity. The one true Church must necessarily be the final appeal to the world, the final demonstration of the one perfect truth and the one perfect holiness. Not by appeal or argument will the world be brought to know. It must be con-

vinced by men, not by discussions. The demonstration it could not reject would be a Church altogether united in her testimony. By any kind of unity the world may be impressed. The unity of compromise can go and far, the unity of regulation farther still. So much may any visible unity accomplish that no man has a right to set up against it aught trivial, aught not essential to truth and liberty. Yet, if either truth or liberty be infringed, the most absolute external unity, though it might silence, would not convince the world.

In the Middle Ages the ideal of one visible organization was for all practical issues attained. The doubter was awed, the scoffer was punished ; none quarrelled with the creed ; none absented themselves from the services of religion. Yet it was a time better described as an age of non-inquiry than as an age of faith. What of the type of unbelief which allowed men to lie and steal and commit adultery with a grossness there is reason to hope the Christian Churches have somewhat left behind ? Implicit acceptance of the Church's teaching and authority, if that by itself is a gain, was heavily counterbalanced by the daily demonstration of their moral and spiritual ineffectiveness. When our Lord said that the world would know, He meant more than that the evidence of one splendid organization would be able to convince men, while leaving them still worldly. He expected the world to know after a fashion which would expel its worldliness. And, in our present elementary stage of progress, there is

room for legitimate doubt as to whether this result would be much forwarded by the existence of vaster organizations, or even by a corporate union of all the sects in Christendom.

Our Lord found in His own day an even more complete unity of ecclesiastical organization than existed in the Middle Ages, but He seems to have estimated it at a small value. An extreme regard for its outward efficacy, without a corresponding reality in the heart, He bluntly called hypocrisy. He plainly declared that, except the righteousness of His followers excelled the righteousness of those who trusted in strict acceptance of what the Church taught and punctilious observance of what she appointed, they would be no princes in the Kingdom of Heaven, nay, would not so much as enter in the humblest capacity. That He was bringing division into this hollow unity He was well aware, for He came not to bring peace, but a sword, not to set people at one, but, in the nearest and dearest relationships, to set them at variance. For the purpose He came to serve, the World must see, not the expression of unity only, but the reality of it. By any other unity the Church is not so much brought into the world as the world into the Church. Nor does even the form of union abide. In the times of greatest outward unity the roots of the greatest divisions in the Christian Church are often to be sought. Much dissolution of outward union may be needed to keep us dissatisfied with less than the true unity ; and a corporate union of sects may never exist in this world, may never in

our imperfect condition be desirable to have in existence. The one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, in all and above all, may have a more convincing manifestation, through oneness of godly living and holy service and charitable forbearance and mutual sympathy and active co-operation, in many organizations than in one.

Were this essential oneness more displayed, visible unity might not be wanted, but the careless might be arrested, the worldly touched, the scoffer silenced, by a spirit which was all the more clearly one, for bearing many names in subordination to the Name that is above every name. Our present divided state might, therefore, be entirely consistent with a most effective manifestation of the true and essential oneness of the Christian Church. For learning this higher unity our divisions may be a call and an opportunity. What is the worth of the charity which has nothing to surmount? To admire an enlarged reproduction of ourselves in the organization to which we belong and which has largely moulded us to its own fashion, is an easy virtue, and is not inconsistent with the worst intolerance and the narrowest vanity. Only the charity which surmounts differences of name and status and type, has proved its worth, and, in the great differences now existing among us, we can find exercise even for Christ's own charity.

The opportunity has been but imperfectly used, yet the lesson has not been altogether without profit. With all her divisions, how much oneness would the

world perceive in the Church, were there not such a mingling of the Church and the world ! And have not these separations been a winnowing of the Church, so that already many apparently great differences are discovered to be too small to dissolve the bonds of fellowship ? The love which hopeth all things has been taught to surmount many barriers, and the union which is comprehensive as well as expansive is so much the nearer. The Church has been compelled to be more of a spiritual and less of a material influence and so to fulfil better her true service to the world.

Confidence in the power of an outward unity to convince is, after all, merely confidence in the flesh, confidence in the visible and material. Outward unity is by itself no spiritual phenomenon. It is only spiritual in so far as it is the expression of inward oneness. To this end every organization should be directed. Kant's rule, that every man should legislate for himself by laws applicable to a universe, might be made the test of all organizations. The rule would then read, Organize a Church as though it were the Church Universal. Such a rule could only read, Organize the Church by insight and love and not by power under any disguise. Such a Church alone may be all-comprehensive. The promise of the future is not in the greatness or smallness of the organization that applies the rule, but in the universal principle of its application. At present it may only embrace a few, but it has in it the power to embrace all who are seeking truth in freedom and in love.

When Paul said, "We are of the circumcision who worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh," many held it pernicious heresy, and few were found of the circumcision he described. But this caused him no dismay. The largest community of people having confidence in an external rite, he knew, was ultimately exclusive ; whereas the smallest company of those who worshipped by the Spirit of God only, was all-comprehensive. The sense of the weakness of his party did not even constrain him to silence, for the assertion of spirituality, and the denial of all ritual or any other outward test as a mark of Christ, was, he knew, the truest charity and alone gave promise of the ultimate reconciliation of all differences.

Nor would it be charity, but the hiding of their hope, for any who believe that they have seen this same truth in its modern form, to hesitate to say that they have discovered the one Church, the catholic, the true. They are the true Catholics who worship God by the Spirit of God, and need no sacerdotal aid, but glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in mere largeness and visibility of organization or earthly rank of Church dignitary or earthly splendour in priest or temple. And, if any who hold this view of the true Church still hesitate, it is not from doubt of the certainty of what they hold, but solely from the old external habit of thought, the vain trust in what we see and the foolish pride in what has size and impressiveness in the world, from which all men

are only partially emancipated. Yet, in spite of this wavering vision and faltering step, wrought by evil custom and unspiritual judgment, when they can look beyond the Church to the Kingdom of God, they do not hesitate to ascribe to this ideal of spiritual fellowship all glory and to profess towards it all allegiance. For them the true pope and ambassador of Heaven sits, not in Rome, launching bulls and determining the validity of orders, but in the Heavenly Places, seeing visions and dreaming dreams. The visions are of faith and hope and love, soaring high above all differences, of Franciscan Friar and Salvation Army Captain, of Anglican Bishop and Methodist Evangelist. The godliness which Churches esteem—details of worship, activity in organizing all the prominent things of religious service—are only mistily visible to them on the clouded horizon, whilst humility, kindness, patience, love, are radiant in the open vault of a heaven cleared from cloud and storm-rack. And the chief dream they dream is of a Church of such devout souls as are made of unerring wisdom by the guidance of the heart, and of undivided fellowship by loyalty to the Divine Head.

CHAPTER XIII

DISCERNING THE BODY OF CHRIST

Task of finding this Church and accepting its authority. Begin with our own fellowship of the two or three. Judging ourselves. Practical belief in the Holy Catholic Church. The common gain. Acceptance without demonstration. The insight of the free among the free. An outward authority which cannot disagree with the authority within.

THIS conception of the true Church as composed, not of any visible organization, not of any particular fellowship in Christ's name, but of the faithful in all Churches, for whom the name of Christ is above every name, and who through Him keep themselves in the love of God, seems to many attractive as a theory, but worthless or even dangerous in practice. First of all they ask, how is it to be recognized? Is it given to man to discriminate thus between his fellowmen? Only a self-confident and censorious pietism would even make the attempt. And were it possible to distinguish even with the certainty of the Divine judgment, between the sheep and the goats, what authority could this scattered, unorganized, non-corporate body ever exercise? What a contrast in practical efficacy between such a Church and one true Church, visibly manifested in an actual body, an organization uniting its people in one uncontested creed and one universally accepted ritual!

As for this Church of the Saints, where is it found, and what can it determine of creed or conduct, if it were found?

The answer is that it is found everywhere by all who have affinity of soul, and that it is the only authority in the world entirely in agreement with the authority within, and that the habit of speaking of it lightly arises from a worldly conception of power, as though it were only power to compel man contrary to the free and rational choice of his own will.

Only one person can excommunicate us from the true Church and that person is our own self. No other person's excommunication, except in so far as it is the embodiment of our own, has any validity. And even we ourselves can only excommunicate ourselves by what the apostle describes as failure to discern the body of Christ. This failure is not in any defect in the proper administration of the sacraments by the proper persons, nor in any neglect to think of the right doctrines in connection with them. But we are "one bread, one body," the apostle says, and the practical denial of this fellowship in Christ alone can rob the ordinances of the Church of their efficacy. The sole reason why it was not possible to eat the Lord's Supper was not error either in the administration or in the doctrinal view of its purpose, but the conduct of the communicant which was a denial of its meaning. One was hungry and another was drunken. One starved while the other had riotous abundance. There was no communi-

cation of blessings as among brethren, but the rich even paraded their abundance before the poor. Wherefore, because their whole conduct was a denial of all the sacrament meant, they not only did not partake of it well, but what they did was worse than no sacrament at all.

Were the Church to turn her attention from the part which admits of no demonstration, and which, moreover, being God's operation, will doubtlessly be adequately carried out, to direct it upon this requirement of human fellowship, which lies to our hands and is often very imperfectly met, the true purpose of the ordinance would be better served. Once men saw the Head and from Him learned of the Body; now we must 'discriminate' the Body and from it learn of the Head. To find Christ we must discriminate the fellowship of the two or three with whom we are met in Christ's name, and discriminate our own right to be reckoned of the number. Herein lies our practical and effective relation to the Church universal. It does not consist in any mere recognition of distant representatives or in any acceptance of general principles. The task is nearer and surer. It is to discriminate the body of Christ in those around us who, as little children, abide as members of Christ's family and humble learners in His school. It means discriminating in the woman old and poor, in threadbare gown and old-fashioned bonnet, the beauty of holiness and the dignity of Christ's gentleness, and being able to treat her in every relation of life as the guest who has been

honoured to sit at Christ's right hand. Even more than this, it means to refrain from reviewing the profitless life of the prodigal and to receive him as one whom the Father ran to meet when He saw him a great way off.

This task is not to be accomplished by discriminating others. We must discriminate ourselves, if we would not be judged, because the only selection is by affinity. The ultimate question is, how much have we of the spirit of Christ. To what extent have we surmounted distinctions of wealth and reputation and position, and arrived at the supreme distinctions of faith and hope and love? Are we anxious to discover them? Are our eyes open to them? Is there in us an affinity to which they discover themselves? Do we so value these supreme distinctions that they enable us to surmount distinctions even of creed and sect? Are we taught, by our knowledge of the worth of the riches of the spirit, to fear lest differences of name, of standing, of education, of reputation, of sect, should deprive us of the privilege of receiving a disciple in Christ's name?

This is the true and practical expression of a belief in the Holy Catholic Church. It is nothing less than a denial of any rejection of any brother for whom Christ died, which is nothing less in the end than a denial of contempt for any man. The heart which prays continually for grace to recognize all who truly name the name of Christ despises no one.

Only in so far as they give expression to this first recognition of fellowship are the judgments of popes

and bishops, assemblies and presbyteries, councils and conferences catholic. To judge by communions, though one belong to the largest and best, is to be a schismatic and divide the body of Christ ; to judge by creed, though we alone of mortal men held the truth, is to be of a sectarian spirit ; to judge by outward character and consistency is to forget that Christ came as a physician for the sick. All these tests together would not enable us to exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees.

To judge aright we must judge as Christ judged. He judged no man, yet, if He judged, His judgment was just. In the ordinary sense He passed judgment on none. He proclaimed none worthless, none hopeless. Yet men were continually being judged by their relations to Him. The result was infallible, because men judged themselves. Those who loved the light came to Him, those who rejected Him showed that they desired to walk in darkness. And, in so far as we are like our Master in our judgment of the things to be loved and to be hated, we are in the world as He was, judging none, yet, when we judge, having our judgment just. The Church which would judge none by her estimate of men's characters, but was such as would infallibly allow them to judge themselves by their estimate of her spirit, which would not judge by drawing broad lines in the world between the good and the bad, but by attracting what is akin and repelling what is alien, would have her fan in her hand, and have grain only and not chaff on her floor.

Unfortunately no denomination is the true Church in this sense. Motives of policy and methods of strife too much prevail. The ancient leaven of Paganism, which was scarce half removed at the beginning, and has not yet been wholly purged out through the centuries, still works. Worldly dignities have been baptized into the Christian name without undergoing much change; and the worldly power has not been greatly altered for being called the spiritual arm. A direct appeal to any ecclesiastical authority, a direct demand for belief, without sifting out the truth, and for obedience, without discriminating the right, would be at best an acceptance of this mixture of the Church and the world in a proportion doubtfully favourable to the Church. Yet the actual fellowship to which we belong is important, because our sphere must mainly be found within its borders. We should, therefore, discriminate the best according to our ability.

But we should also recognize that no Church wholly fails to show the active presence of the true leaven which transmutes and assimilates to itself, and that, therefore, no one fails in some degree to approve itself an association of the meek who inherit the earth which hands down the best riches earned in the experience of the race. With however much lumber the Churches may be encumbered, they are nevertheless the treasure-houses of the ages, the store-houses of the spirit and service of the saints.

To say that we must prove ourselves their heirs by such discrimination as the saints themselves first em-

ployed in the search, is only to say of religion what, in some measure, is true of all else that is worth having in the world. Even riches a man may not usefully inherit except he have as much power to deal with them as his predecessor had to acquire them. Nor may we inherit knowledge except by labouring to know what our predecessors have taught and by thinking it again as our own thought.

The life of the individual is so short and his capacities are so limited that, in comparison with the race, his personal discoveries are few, and the enterprises he actually initiates unimportant. He must take his place in a world fashioned for his use by those who came before him, and with his best efforts he can only hope to make it a little better for those who may come after. Yet we prove ourselves heirs to the past only as we can make it live in the present, and we leave nothing after us, if no one can keep it alive for his own need. What has not unfolded to us the first, fresh interest of a new discovery, lived again in our imagination, implanted itself in our memory and by its use enlarged our freedom and our scope we have never truly possessed. In the same way we must appropriate the riches of the Church. After the manner of men to whom the task lies near and whose most urgent interests are involved, we must prove all things and hold fast only what is good.

But how, we may well ask, is this task possible for the ignorant and toil-worn or even for the fairly well educated? Must they not in the main accept what is told them? How can they institute the

elaborate historical inquiries necessary to discriminate the eternal from the fleeting, the essential from the accidental? Must not this necessarily be the work of the few?

To recover the treasures which mankind may have lost on its burdened journey is a task possible for only very few. Where general agreement is found they may confirm us in our sense of truth; and where disagreement is found they may remind us of our liability to err, and perhaps enable us to correct our judgment. Yet, without undervaluing this investigation, the useful appropriation of the past is of another nature. It is done in life and not in the study; and for it a humble sense of ignorance and the sense of being weary and heavy laden are the finest preparation. It needs nothing else than an insight into what is highest in character and most enduring in life, and a readiness to appropriate it by consecration to its claims. Thus good, confirmed, and approved by the practical issues of life, is inherited daily by the humblest. Because they accept without intellectual question, we may not conclude that they accept without evidence. The outward form in which the conviction is expressed may be borrowed, but the real, practical conviction, which enriches the soul and strengthens the will and sets a man with his face to the light, demonstrates itself to them. The expression may only have been received in an external way from a formal tradition, while the reality which has been embodied in it has been won by the faith and the obedience of Christ-

like souls. Their submission is not in the end to any authority which has supplanted the divinely taught insight of their own spirits, but they have arrived at the convictions which truly govern their lives, by discovering, amid all differences and worldly oppositions, the same Spirit working in the Church which, amid all debate and conflict of evil desire, works in their own hearts.

This is the obedience of the free among the free, and thus only may we inherit the labours of those who have been themselves delivered from bondage. The chief cause of dissatisfaction with it is impatience at the slow method of freedom. We are still offered the heritage of those who have stood fast, at the sacrifice of all that men hold dear, in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, on the singular condition that we should suffer ourselves to be again entangled in the yoke of bondage. But the heritage of free men can only be won and held by the free, who do not subject themselves to any human guidance, but press nearer to the centre of all truth, and live more zealously the life which tests truth. To be heirs of the free—and there is no other spiritual heritage—we must be set free with the liberty of the children of God. The more we are free in the present, the larger and more truly possessed will be our heritage from the past; and the larger our heritage, the wider will be the sphere of our freedom and the greater the liberty with which we live in it.

Were this condition perfectly fulfilled, the author-

ity without and the authority within would be in perfect agreement, and we should have the final assurance of truth, the final assurance of His authority Who made the world in wisdom and the spirit of man after His own image and Who appointed both history and experience as His witnesses. Only through this agreement shall we attain to freedom ; and only thus can we know the God who would win and not compel us to His obedience. The way may be long, the possibilities of error great, the failures saddening. Men will ever be tempted to seek a shorter, more imperative method. But God is perpetually destroying all that is built with less costly materials than love and freedom. He will only give what we win for ourselves, He will only give us the certainty which is consistent with patience and sympathy and insight. Neither in Christ, nor in any true work of His in the earth, shall we ever find any demand inconsistent with the task of working out our own salvation, which is another name for our own freedom. To man the way may seem long and tortuous, but God hasteth not and is not weary.

BOOK III
THE CHURCH'S CREED



CHAPTER I

ASSERTION AND TESTIMONY

The abiding need of conviction. Thus saith the Church, the Scriptures, the Father. Dogmatic enunciation and human manifestation. Belief and practice. Diminution of assertion and growth of testimony.

IN our age, as much as in any previous age of the world, great and sure and well-defined convictions are necessary weapons, if we would fight successfully the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye and the pride of life. To attain any abiding triumph it must be a fight of faith, and not a fight of uncertainties or vague possibilities. To the attractions without and the lusts within, certainties, as near and as sure as they are themselves, need to be opposed. We are engaged in a battle and not in a friendly discussion, and the issues of it are life and death. Noble sentiments, high aspirations, dim longings after the Infinite may speak of man's high destiny, but can they, in the present conflict with the world, the flesh and the devil, suffice? In the noise and confusion and smoke of battle, can commands be too definite or even too peremptory? In the study, a dim approach to the large and vague and distant may seem enough, but, in life, how may we triumph over strong and subtle and irreconcilable foes who have their allies in our own heart, unless we can deny

their power in the name of a God certainly known, and an immortal soul certainly believed in? Too often we have spoken as if our creed were a matter of little moment, and as if only bigotry and narrowness could occupy itself any more with even the Creed of the Church. Having arrived at conclusions which annihilate the old external authority in thought, men are sometimes content to believe that there is no authority at all, and that because we have to come back to the spiritual insight of the individual, all conviction is a matter of individual opinion. Then we are told that the thing of importance is not men's creed, but their doings, and that the one thing we can be sure of is that,

“He can't be wrong whose life is in the right.”

But even this well-used quotation contains in it another inference than the unimportance of what a man believes. It says “he can't be wrong,” not, “he may indifferently be right or wrong.” For making our life right this is a fundamental distinction. If right conviction can be inferred from right-living, creed is not worthless compared with conduct. If, as has been said, a man's creed is but the result of his life, his beliefs being only the spirit of his actions gradually formed into convictions, it is equally true that a man's doings are but the children of his thoughts and that no man has acted nobly who has not first in his own heart thought nobly.

Habit and custom often confuse the issues, both in the individual and in the age. Men cannot rid

themselves at once of old associations, old views, old habits. Creeds as abstractions may thus be held with entirely opposite working rules of life. Thought itself may be regarded as a function of matter, while the man who holds it in theory, continues to follow in practice, ideals set up by those who believed man to be a spiritual or even an immortal being. Men's working views and their theoretical conclusions are frequently at variance, so that a too hasty generalization may infer that they are independent. Because the result is not immediate, however, it may be all the more certain and calamitous, showing in the end that we cannot think meanly of man's nature, yet continue to demand of him a high standard of conduct ; or limit his life to the things seen and temporal, yet expect him to struggle and aspire as if he still hoped for the things unseen and eternal. The consequences may be long in working themselves out, generations it may be, but that a man's thought of what is above him and within him will ultimately determine his aim and govern his conduct and set him either in the freedom of self-control or the slavery of subjection to desire, admits of no question.

In view of this situation, we have to consider how, upon the authority we have found, a creed may be established, clear and certain and imperative, adequate to man's practical necessities, a call to high endeavour and a condemnation of all things base. Many are doubtful of success ; and we have even had such illogical attempts at compromise as might argue complete despair. On the one hand critical results

are ignored, and doctrines are drawn from Holy Writ like legal decisions from the Statute Book ; and, on the other, history is ignored, and the authority of the traditional Church is invoked in order to set up, with the old external authority, the whole ancient creed.

Nor is one much use without the other. If the Church's faith is guaranteed now from without, it must have always had the same guarantee. An infallible Church with a fallible Scripture is not an institution that has a high degree of probability. Conclusions which annihilate the old external security in the Church's reception of the truth, cannot be made consistent with an external security in the interpretation or the application of it. Yet an infallible Scripture without an infallible Church does not deliver us from private interpretation.

Moreover, those who fear that, upon the authority left us, the old, external, dogmatic tradition of the official Church cannot be maintained in all its detail, are not mistaken. By no device can the theologian have the legal certainty and unhesitating confidence of the days when he stopped short at an infallible Church or even an infallible Bible, now that he has travelled into the fallibilities of human nature and human history. The only result hitherto of making the attempt has been to raise doubt regarding our determination to think according to truth and believe according to knowledge.

Much discussion undoubtedly was saved and much unquestioning acceptance secured when the final ground was " Thus saith the Church." As soon as it

became "Thus saith the Scriptures," controversy entered the large field of differences in interpretation. Yet, if it was large, it was limited; and when the meaning was ascertained, agreement could be insisted on.

But now that it has become "Thus saith the Father," not what He once said, but what He always says, where is the hope of finality? In the last resort, we come to our own religious insight for determining what the Father says. But is not this insight imperfect, and may it not, through evil, even be perverted? That no man stands alone, is still true. He is nourished and trained in the religious society, and is a joint-heir of all the revelation of the ages, a joint-heir with Jesus Christ Himself. But, if the final discrimination and appropriation and employment of these treasures depends upon the personal insight of the much deluded individual soul, is this being very efficiently inherited?

Nor may we at present speak with much more confidence of the religious society than of the religious persons who compose it. At this very moment in the world's history, it is full of perplexity and little confident respecting any sure guidance to be offered in the present distress. And does not this arise just from the independence of its members? How different from the days when the official Church proclaimed its finding and none questioned the presence of the perfect and eternal truth! How much more difficult is it now that we must fight our way through, as it were, with the compass in one hand and

a sword in the other. Above all men, the modern theologian may well mourn the vanished past and think enviously of predecessors, who were only required to enunciate the Church's creed to find it received everywhere and always. Compare his hesitating utterance and apologetic mien, in these days of universal doubt and question, with how, in the days of an articulated system of doctrine, he was unhesitating on any detail of the abstrusest questions of the faith and had no inconsiderable endowment of God's omniscience through a Scripture inspired in every letter.

Yet confidence, after all is said, is not conviction ; and assertion is not truth ; and even articulated consistency is not demonstration ; and to receive anything on the assertion of another, though it be an infallible Church, is not knowledge. We travel by this method into yet greater uncertainties and into inquiries lying farther away from the track of our common practical life. But, when the demonstration is to our own hearts, when it is the truth that proves itself by making us free, when as we grow in grace we grow in knowledge, the manifestation is altogether human, and, while it is far short of omniscience, it is adequate when tested by practical endeavour. When, on the contrary, truth is put before us by dogmatic assertion, when its demonstration is in the giver and not in the receiver, would we rest on any better foundation than custom and quiescence, we must adventure on elaborate historical investigations respecting the origin and purity and

qualification of the power which does not say "Thus saith the Lord as thine own heart knoweth," but "Thus saith the Lord as someone else thinks he knows." How, in that case, can we fulfil the old condition—to will to do the deed that we may know the doctrine?

The chief reason why this evidence seems defective is that we desire to be established on other than religious conditions. We desire to appeal to some motive stronger in man than love of truth and love of holiness; and we would arrive by a quicker method than freedom. We turn our eyes away from the Divine purpose with us, and resent the Divine patience. We wish an authority which can dominate men without being required to win the loyalty of their hearts, and which can maintain in them a careful regard to religious observances without being required to work in them personal faith and consecration. This is not for the truly religious soul, but for the multitudes who are governed chiefly by custom, who believe chiefly to save inquiry, to whom the Church is an imposing secular institution, whose lives demonstrate nothing except the conventional, and who, if disturbed in their trust in the Visible Church, may easily fall under worse influences.

But the truth has always been set for the fall as well as the rising of many. This requires us to have regard to all sincerity, however ignorant, lest we cause a little one to stumble, and not rashly disturb conviction or throw doubt on any object of reverence. But that is because all sincerity, being

patient, laborious, teachable, is in the way of the manifestation of the truth which life provides: and does not mean that we are to tolerate obscurantism or superstition, or admit that any claim can be more urgent than inquiry into the truth we can discover and search for the holiness to which alone we should give all reverence. If the demonstration is in life and the evidence spiritual not intellectual, practical not theoretical, truth is presented in the form which the humble, reverent and obedient soul can receive, and which no ability which seeks in pride and scorn and resistance, can discover. But for this reason the Creed must be circumscribed by experience. We cannot thus demonstrate large abstractions and all the infinite detail of the government of God. We can only receive of God what corresponds with the likeness of God in which we were made, and we can only be sure of it in so far as it enables us to attain more perfectly to His image. Hence the Creed of the Church may be far from a finished and perfected system. It is becoming increasingly clear that the Church will be unable to believe what she is unwilling to practise. Then how shall her assertions be diminished! But also how shall her testimony be confirmed! What creed could be too meagre, if it were, in all devotion of heart and life, the utter belief of the Church; and how would it be convincing, if it commended itself to men's consciences in the sight of God by a manifestation in life and not a mere proclamation from on high!

CHAPTER II

BE NOT CALLED RABBI

In Christ's stead. All ye are brethren. True scholars. Speaking with authority. Revelation and experience. Personal conviction. The uses of perplexity.

AFTER all has been said in its favour, the method of weighing traditions and citing texts is only second-hand dealing in truth. It is the method of the Rabbi, a method emphatically rejected by Christ Himself, and forbidden to His followers. By a humbler, yet bolder attitude, Jesus expects His followers to magnify their office both as learners and teachers. They are neither to call any one Rabbi, nor to accept the flattering distinction; neither to submit to external authority, nor to impose it. The true theological attitude is defined by Christ in a sentence. "All ye are brethren," He says, "and one is your teacher." The wise and the learned, the high and the low, are all alike helpers of each other's faith. They are brethren in a common search, not lords over one another's submission. Even Christ Himself is not our Rabbi. Even He does not demand from man uninquiring acceptance of His verdict. On the contrary, He is our Teacher. And this assures all patience with us till we learn and receive, and not merely submit.

This tolerance of slowness and error is the mark

of every true teacher. He has no satisfaction in the mere growth of information as affirmed by authorities. He encourages his disciples to rise above the rule of authorities and to investigate till each is his own authority. This he teaches not in pride, but in humility. Intellectual vanity parades authorities as people on the fringe of high society parade distinguished acquaintances. Real learning on the contrary is occupied with truth, and, before its greatness, the wisest are most humble. As he also knows that all knowledge is bounded by ignorance, the highest honour he can offer a fellow-labourer is not acceptance of his conclusions without inquiry, but care and diligence in estimating his researches. And the teacher of Divine truth, who after this manner meets his fellow-men as brethren engaged in a common inquiry, will not care to stop with authorities, either of the Church or of the Scriptures. Nay, the more he learns the superlative value of both, the less he will desire to use them to end inquiry.

Nothing will satisfy him short of Christ's own method. Who gives such a picture of the Church as Christ? Who makes such use of Scripture? Yet His final appeal is never either to the Church or to the Scriptures. He invokes the good offices of the Church, not its authority. He appeals to the testimony of Scripture, but never offers a word of it as a final reason for belief. His final appeal is always to the heart taught by God. Given the requisite Divine preparation, quickening insight and

enlarging sympathy, then such truth as He speaks, displayed as He displays it, comes home with the immediate sanction of the Divine approval. On the authority of a man's own Divinely instructed heart and on the authority of his Divinely interpreted experience, the word spoken is found to be undeniably true, a word in the last remove not revealed by flesh and blood, but by the Father in Heaven. Christ speaks with authority just because He speaks straight to the heart and the experience. For this very reason He has no need to be an authority; and much less has He need to rely on others as authorities. The truth He taught was not a deliverance from on high, which He or some one else had at one time received, to be now accepted merely on the ground that it was once enunciated. But it is to be received because, however it may have been first delivered, it remains eternally true, proving itself to be the true revelation of God, because it has its evidence in the hearts made in His image.

The religious teacher must learn that he does not least prove his regard for the agreement which has marked the true Church in all ages when he seeks to arrive at it by a deeper consent than is attained by hasty suppression of disagreement. Nor may he doubt that he best esteems even the special experiences of the saints which he cannot repeat, by seeking to approve their worth in the experiences of every day. Revelation, like every other work of God in time, has seasons and peculiar channels and unique

events. The record of Revelation recounts beginnings needing no repetition, and supreme attainments not to be repeated till the final consummation. Yet the revelation of God to one age should approve itself to every age, and should ever anew demonstrate itself in a society which ought to be steadily growing in spiritual discernment. Hence theology, however much it may be a matter of revelation in the sources of its knowledge, must be a science of experience in putting its truth to the test.

Submission without inquiry, so far from being an assurance of truth and righteousness, is a failure to find anything but the shell of truth, and a rejection of life's highest duty. The soul that might receive God's direction, and the God Who is waiting to direct, are alike dishonoured. The immediate convenience may be great, but no one ever found truth or righteousness by considering convenience. Truth is not true except on personal conviction, and only error is increased by the multiplication of echoes. The pursuit of truth is a high endeavour in which no fellow mortal can be more to us than our brother. Older and wiser a brother may be, one able and willing to teach, but not one, however experienced and wise, to decide. To accept our brother's conclusions, without ourselves attempting to reach them, is not to honour either God or our brother by our meekness, but to dishonour both by our slackness ; and to believe that our brother wishes us to be convinced by him and not by the truth is to believe him also capable of dishonouring God. Higher

position is not to be granted to any man, higher position no man should accept, than to be a fellow-seeker after God, whose greater advancement is measured by the ardour with which he seeks for others a like progress.

Even to the weakest and most ignorant, the strongest and wisest may assume no other attitude. To know that no place or power, no eminence in Church or State, no equipment of learning or natural ability can confer the right to treat the humblest disciple of the Master as other than our fellow-scholar, is to understand the Master's method of truth. It is to discover to what insight in man He reveals truth, and by what dignity in man He demonstrates it.

This recognition of the dignity and Divine relationship of every human soul requires us to be slow to condemn any conscientious conviction, in the recognition of God's liberal variety in the minds and characters of men. To be patient under God's method we need to have something of the largeness of God's heart. Claims to be masters of other people's judgments, impatience with what we take to be other people's errors, desire to dominate by unproved assertion, all proclaim that the difference from the old days, when the most emphatic argument was the faggot, is more in loss of power than in change of spirit. Were there still the old power to enforce an unquestioned Church or even an unquestioned Scripture, there might again be no limit, short of destroying all who disagree, emphatic enough to

show disapproval of their conclusions and detestation of their motives. Wherefore, instead of mourning that a hasty assent is no longer easy to command, we should rather rejoice in the perplexities which compel to a more brotherly regard to our own limitations and to our neighbour's right to be himself. Let us be grateful for the perplexities that keep us in a measure in the better way of seeking fellowship in the truth. Thereby, if our present possession may seem small and insecure, the reversion of our true inheritance will, not only be surer, but of ampler promise.

CHAPTER III

BACK TO CHRIST

An unchanging watchword. Misrepresentation of Christ's method and appeal. The medium. The first task of the Apostle. Testimony and interpretation. His method.

IF the Christ of God is not one who proclaims truth altogether above our reasoning, but is the perfect appeal of the Divine incarnated in humanity which demonstrates itself direct to the nature made in God's image, the first resolve of every disciple in every age should be to press, without intermediary, directly to His feet. No fellow mortal, were he even an Apostle, should intervene. Nay, of all men an Apostle were surely the last person to be found between the soul and its Lord. Back to Christ should therefore be our unchanging watchword, never to be enough insisted on. If any misunderstanding in presenting the Master can be detected, no reverence for a fellow mortal may hinder us in setting it aside. And if the Master's own interpretation of the meaning and purpose of His work is different from the interpretation of any Apostle, we must accept the Master's, and reject, in so far as it conflicts with His, the Apostle's.

Yet, like all watchwords, it is ever in danger of misuse. Christ is a Teacher Who speaks directly to man's sense of truth, his deepest feelings, his

highest conception of the uses of life. But this does not mean that there is no other way of approach, no other record, no other channel of communication than the Gospels. Jesus transmitted His words and His acts, which were His mightiest words, through one sole medium, the memories and affections and activities of the souls that were moved by them. Nothing remains to us except what the Spirit called to their remembrance, but it was for living, and, only as it was lived, for writing. The life of the Church is, therefore, the supreme manifestation of her Lord : and even of the Apostolic writings their chief witness is their use to the Church throughout the ages.

We go back by the Apostles to Christ, not through a colourless medium, but through one suffused and glorified by intercourse with Him. Were this personal quality of its witness a hindrance and not the most perfect vehicle, Jesus made a mistake in trusting any man to repeat any saying or interpret any incident. Instead of spending all His life on lake and mountain, in synagogue and temple, eating with publicans and sinners, and speaking to short-lived men, why did He not spend part of it on autobiography and part on a compendium of theology ? Surely because He was satisfied to entrust both His life and His teachings to the souls that knew Him and loved Him and would remember them for the needs of their own souls and would make them manifest for the needs of others. Wherefore, although as a critical task

the endeavour to go behind the Apostle will ever be attractive and for certain ends useful, the endeavour to eliminate the individuality of the Apostle, to sift out all that may be regarded as testimony and reject all that is offered as explanation, can never be a religious task or of much religious profit. It is of the nature of an experiment in light apart from the atmosphere. This has its interest and its uses, but the business of life will ever be done by light in its common medium. So the ordinary dependence upon Christ will always be through the only medium He employed, through the only relationship to mankind in which He ever sought to stand.

In accordance with this method, the first task of the Apostle was not to set forth an ordered account of his Master's life and teaching. He began with his Master's relation to the conflict raging around him. He preached not himself, nor even his peculiar relation to Jesus, but Christ Jesus as Lord and himself every man's servant for Jesus' sake. As all the worth of his own testimony depended on the faithfulness with which he served, the only way in which he could ask others to accept it was as a power to accomplish a like service. To this end, his first task was to interpret and apply the truth to the questions of the time as they arose, and only to write biographies of the Master when that also became a question of the time for a generation who had not themselves known Him. Wherefore, it may be that the religious man will not greatly

distress himself to distinguish between an interpretation that was lived and a testimony that was lived, counting both a manifestation of the Christ Who came, not to be a philosopher, but to be a Saviour, and Who ever manifests Himself through the men who have been given Him out of the world. The first task, at all events, will be to understand the mind of the Apostle, who went forth holding in his heart, in clear and steadfast vision, the glory of his Master's lowliness which he had seen with mortal eyes, the mind of one who knew from his own experience his Master's power to transform a degraded world, and who carried all this wealth of memory through a time before custom had made stale the methods of grace, and in a Church wherein the advancing tide of Christian influence had not swept so far forward as to have mixed with it the muddy waters of a half converted Paganism.

Yet, even to an Apostle we may not surrender the right of measuring this revelation by our own need, and still less the duty of proving it by our own lives. To accept it on any authority as pious platitude, with sanctimonious dullness of feeling and narrow perversion of the uses of the earth, is not faith but unbelief. The only response which would satisfy the true Apostle would be a faith like his own, one which sees once more, as he first saw, truth new and Divinely strange, grace new and Divinely compassionate, salvation new and Divinely comprehensive. Thus used, the presentation of Christ when His followers first saw Him walking with healing shadow

through this sinful world and had the first fresh impression of the testimony the work bore to the physician, is an ever open Gate Beautiful into the inmost sanctuary of spiritual things. How otherwise should the life of the Christ have been written ; and how otherwise could it receive the highest interpretation ? We may no more make light of the interpretation than of the presentation. To do so is to prove that we have missed the true method in our own interpretation. What except pedantry could question that the true method of interpreting the Saviour of the world is the method of the Apostle ? With unaverted eyes he follows His Master through the world, seeing the barriers of speech borne down by sympathy, and helping to break off the fetters from the slaves of superstition and vice. The Church's life was still too intense to be confined to rigid organization, and its truth too much alive to be stiffened into formulas. Everything passed directly from the soul of a man inspired to the souls of the men he hoped to inspire. Nothing was of the closet, nothing reached by many-sided concession, nothing won by length of breath in argument, nothing imposed by mere weight of authority in dignitary or council. Men of large experience of the grace of Christ in their own hearts and large experience of its power to renovate a still fiercely hostile world spoke what they had seen, with concreteness and reality. Nothing had yet lost its first fresh lustre. Every triumph of the gospel was at once a natural result of its power and a surprising

manifestation of the personal goodness of a watchful Father. Flesh and blood had not declared this interpretation of their Lord to them; yet, apart from an intimate and compassionate experience of the needs of flesh and blood, nothing of it could ever have been declared. Just because the truth of God, to be perfectly understood, must be incarnated in the interpreter as well as for him, the interpretation of the first Apostles, the humble, loyal, transformed ambassadors of Christ, in the days when His memory was still fresh and His work still new, the interpretation of those whose transfigured lives were more directly from the Life they interpreted, must occupy a place all its own. To later experience it presents both methods and results, not indeed for the determination of our relation to Christ, but of imperative necessity for the application of His truth to our own nature and to our own time.

The first testimony of the Church is also the last, for the credibility of Christ's high claim can never rest merely on things transacted. In a sense, the interpretation must always come first, and the presentation afterwards. The final religious assurance can never be in the memory of another man. Only when the Life had proved its spiritual power was it put into writing to be a permanent spiritual heritage; and each successive age can only accept it as it presents the supreme evidence of being a Divine revelation through the renewed display of its unexhausted power. The person of Jesus is ever itself the corner stone of all testimony regarding

Him, but the evidence which is valid from age to age goes back to it, not through the void, but through the peace and joy and holiness it has wrought in the souls of men in all ages, from which we may not exclude our own.

CHAPTER IV

THE APOSTOLIC WITNESS

Three places in which the Apostle cannot bear his testimony.
In the Great Synagogue. In the Cave of Polyphemus.
In the chair of the Apologist.

THE essential value of the Apostle's presentation of his Lord consists in his own identity with his message. By it he is inspired first to live, and then to write. This truth, however, is continually forgotten, and the Apostle is treated as a mere vehicle of things remote from his own interests and uninfluenced by his own thinking. He is thought only to fulfil his work adequately when he is a colourless medium. Into three places, where, while living, he never dwelt, he is taken that this object may be attained.

The first way of separating the Apostle from his message is to take him into the Great Synagogue.

Already in the Apostle's own day, professional reverence and ill applied diligence had taken possession of the ancient Hebrew Scriptures. Divine illumination shone, not from, but exclusively in Moses and the Prophets. For the living present the radiance had died out so utterly that personal insight seemed to border on heresy, and interpretation had become a mere matter of weighing up the doctors of the law. While the Apostles were still moderns,

they were without interest for the Scribe, and were only read in workshops and families and assemblies of eager-faced people in attic rooms. The language of their writings being current speech and the teaching they enforced in its first fresh power, no more was needed. If humble and ignorant people were at times perplexed by the argument, they never misunderstood the spirit. But, with the lapse of time, the labours of the Scribe became a necessity for the Apostles as well as for the Prophets. As he became the sole authority on the letter, he came to think himself the sole authority on the spirit. For this he was eminently unqualified. The necessary minuteness of his reverent diligence bred in him a hesitating and submissive mind; he learned too much awe for his apparatus of grammatical and theological terms; an opinion of a Father of the Church was valued by him far beyond its wisdom; the sanction of a Church council had for him a weight out of all proportion to the wisdom of party voting. As the Jewish Scribe, so the Christian sought to compass difficulties by grammar, to combat doubts by authority, to keep men safe in ancient, orthodox, unadventurous formulas.

The presupposition of this method is that inspiration is something which suspends a man's own thoughts and implants thoughts quite alien, that it is all of Divine proclamation and has no reverse side of human discovery. The Apostle is treated as if his inspiration had abolished not merely his freedom, but also his humanity. The inspiration of the

Spirit, though it first gave man understanding is not conceived as expanding, elevating, ennobling that understanding to fit it for its purpose, but as supplanting it. Instead of being a power to make the soul larger, truer, wiser, stronger, more loyal to its highest insight, more individual, more original, it is thought of as turning man into a mere vehicle for its own operation. Then, as the more an Apostle was inspired the less he was himself, the less a student of Scripture is himself the better he will interpret. In this view of inspiration, the Spirit is regarded as rejecting the Divine method of fellowship and teaching for the hasty human method of suppressing and imposing. It takes no account of God's way of making a man bless others only in so far as he is himself blessed.

Though the Scribe no longer abides in strength, the influence of his centuries of labour has not passed. Multitudes still read the Scripture as he once read it, finding many things not visibly there, and missing much not obscurely present. But above all they miss the living men who wrote, finding only the arid scribe of the heavenly council who proclaimed. To the Scribe himself the unrest of the present age has done much to give more human thoughts of the inspired writer. It has required him with renewed diligence and opener mind to set himself afresh to his own task of criticism and interpretation, in a way which has at once enlarged his thought of inspiration and delivered his soul from enslaving scholasticism, but he has not yet been able wholly

to undo the work of his predecessor, nor is the reason exclusively either in the ponderous nature of his learning or in the pious obscurantism of his readers. It is that the inspired writer has sometimes only been brought out of the Great Synagogue to be put in a worse place. This second place we may call the Cave of Polyphemus, where he is even less regarded as an individual religious soul.

Polyphemus was a giant with one eye in the centre of his forehead, whose reverence for the gods was disturbed by excessive self-esteem, and whose cave in Ætna was not a place sacred to human emotions. Into this unhappy abode the Apostle has been brought to be subjected to the microscopic gaze of one eye, of a symmetry beyond nature but with a lack of the power to see all round a matter which nature provides. Purely intellectual tests are applied with more subtlety than insight. Single aspects are set forth as the whole. Divergences are ascribed to everything but human nature. A man of rapid emotions, of sensitive heart, of multiform relation to all types of men, writing always face to face with the needs of harassed and erring souls, is found incapable of being logical at one time and a little less logical at another, of being calm at one time and bursting out into burning eloquence at another. He must march ever in the harness of a limited vocabulary, not enlarging or contracting it according to the ability of the person addressed or the complexity of the subject discussed. The microscopic, symmetrical eye looks coldly into him, and, instead

of human nature and God's grace, finds codes and tendencies and fortuitous combinations. Dogmatic conflict replaces the graces of suavity, insight, patience, sympathy. The unity which impresses the ordinary reader is only the fortuitous harmony of patchwork. Though it is probable that the Apostle, like other people, wrote for the ordinary reader, the general impression of a thoughtful perusal is despised for its simplicity. The result is not yet finally determined, but either the Apostolic presentation is taken to be an ever growing misunderstanding of Jesus, or a transformation of Him by degrees from the marvellous peasant of Galilee into the Saviour of the world. In both cases all the apostolic interpretation is to be set aside, and the original facts are to be rediscovered. Then such presentation is made of them as commends itself to men of more acquaintance with literatures than of literary insight, of more diligence in the study than knowledge of life, of more power to detect logical contradictions than to discover unity of feeling and purpose, of more interest in the problems of scholarship than in the problems of the aspiring soul. Out of the ordeal the whole company of the Apostles come forth somewhat of a mangled remnant. That Peter himself has nothing left, John nothing, James nothing, and Paul only a residue of his most argumentative Epistles, might not matter very much, if only we saw that their authors, whosoever they may have been, must have been men of equal spiritual experience.

But a conviction is growing that this excessive

symmetry of vision is near allied to blindness. In the end it only sits in darkness at the mouth of the cave with strong hands examining all who pass, but missing the living person who, by his individuality and wisdom and goodness and earnestness, demonstrates himself and all his work to the eyes that see. Every part of the investigation may be credible, yet the combined result be fitted only to amaze. In every age, for example, an honoured name may be used by appropriation, but in every age such a use must be rare and hazardous ; and a series of writings in which scarce one name is used by right of possession—and that not by later error, but by extended systematic appropriation—would be an astounding singularity. In every age also there may be remarkable revivals of the spirit of the past ; but to ascribe to the imitation of a decadent age a wisdom and insight and grave gentleness beyond the powers and goodness of the most original writers in the most fruitful age, is in itself incredible, and, judged by the circumstances of the time, not less than impossible. Mistakes could be made by the ancients as by us ; essays in imitation could then, as now, be taken for originals. But in every age literary impostures have been rare and of little excellence. Many matters of detail and some entire writings are open to discussion, but that the New Testament as a whole contains the testimony of the actual followers of Jesus and of their immediate disciples, of the men who first faced a hostile world in the earliest ardour of the Church's memory of Him, is evident to the one

broad judgment of the eyes that see, and is only denied by the many narrow judgments of the hands that feel, a test before which no testimony, human or Divine, could ever approve itself.

Finally, from the Cave of Polyphemus the Apostle is brought out only to be put into the chair of the Apologist, where he is, if possible, even more unhappy. A scientific age like the present can only listen to a dispassionate apologist. To meet its needs, the unlearned and impulsive fisherman must be passed through a discipline to improve his methods of investigation and cool his ardour. No objection should escape his watchfulness, and no enthusiasm relax the critical attitude of his mind. Every explanation but the supernatural must first be rigorously applied, and every manner of cross-question rigorously asked. Leaving his position as a disciple at the feet of the Master, he must stand well outside the charmed circle of his Master's influence, to judge and weigh calmly His doings and His character. After concluding this investigation, he must be able to say, "I have considered the matter on every side with a mind free from bias; I have made every allowance for accidental coincidences: and, on mathematical demonstration, it is improbable, in a degree verging towards infinity, that the combination of events necessary to produce Christianity could be a product of chance or of anything but intelligent supervision; and a careful calculation shows an overwhelming preponderance of difficulty on the side of explaining the testimony by natural

means, rather than to suppose that a great spiritual crisis broke in upon the regular course of nature." Thereafter, the Apostle who would carry home conviction to men's minds, shall submit his evidence, tabulating it, sifting it, distinguishing carefully between fact and explanation, and, with the moderation of a scientist and careful avoidance of the exaggeration of the advocate, he shall draw the undeniable conclusions. Then, on reasonable grounds, he may proceed to recommend this religion to the serious attention of mankind, reminding them, with dignity and without rhetoric, that "probability is the guide of life," and that we have here a high degree of probability. This being accomplished, he may proceed in the same spirit to state his doctrines, and to deduce their practical applications.

Unfortunately, where the Apostle actually lived he was not in circumstances to be dealt with effectively by dispassionate advocacy. He had the world, the devil and the flesh to resist within ; and a people given over to the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life, to convert without. He found himself brought to the dividing line where probabilities cease to guide, and where he must leave men the choice of accepting his story or doubting his sanity. He spoke simply, for absolute conviction has as little need of rhetoric as absolute unbelief. He was calm, for absolute conviction is not hysterical. But he showed his faith, not by looking in the face of Christ with indifference, but

by looking in the face of His enemies without fear. Merely intellectual advocacy the Apostle could not give ; and, had he given it, he and his religion would have perished in the jangling of the schools. What he gave was such passionate loyalty as should leave none unconvinced at least of his sincerity and absolute personal assurance, not only of the events in the past to which he testifies, but of their continued validity for the heart and life. An advocate who, in the name of his conviction, can stand up before a scoffing nation and ask, not respect merely, but repentance, knowing that by an ignominious and cruel death men may silence him as they tried to silence his Lord ; an advocate who, still unsatisfied, fears not to face the whole world with the same demand, grudging no toil, sparing no sacrifice, shrinking from no danger, quailing at no agony, and passing finally through the dark portals with his testimony still unfaltering upon his lips, is not dispassionate, yet is vastly convincing. An advocate unmoved may defend probabilities, but it needs an advocate transfigured to urge a redeeming certainty. An Apologist may weigh a creed himself unmoved, but an Apostle offers a Saviour, himself a glowing demonstration.

CHAPTER V

PRIVATE INTERPRETATION

Personal experience. Private opinion. Private interpretation.
Scholars, princes and councils. Question of attitude, not numbers. Theological controversy. Times of conflict.

ALL Scripture is of personal experience. Its supreme value consists in its closeness to man's highest and intensest life. No writer of it is a mere uninfluencing agent for transmission ; nor does he interpret and apply with a scholastic regard for the logical unity of the truth. On the contrary, the impression of unity and progressive consistency, throughout the whole course of the advancing revelation, derives its strength, not from the presence of such a guarantee but from the absence of it ; for only truth could be so indifferent to consistency and so sure of it. Nothing less than the inspiration which leads every soul into the manifold but undivided unity of God, and which implants truth, of boundless variety in application yet one in essence, could be as secure. Then the difference of experiences only shows more clearly the similarity of men's deepest needs ; the wide range of sympathy is only the clearer evidence of the one love ; and the variety of the reflection of Christ only more gloriously displays the undivided perfection of His image. But because all Scripture is of personal experience, it is not, therefore, of

private opinion. Since the world began this progressive consistency, which proved the contrary, has never been absent from the race of the Prophets and Apostles. They lived in the general life, ever seeking a Kingdom of God, and thereby had a unity no form of concerted action could give. A unity of thought, which came through common understanding of God's purpose and was not effected by any general compromise of opinions, and a unity of action, which came from doing God's will and not by any kind of ecclesiastical agreement, shows its source, not in deference to man but in a common purpose to know God's truth and serve His Kingdom.

And as no Scripture is of private opinion, no Scripture can be of private interpretation.

In the first place, this means that the final interpretation cannot be a mere matter of scholarship. The largest equipment of linguistic research, literary insight, and dialectical subtlety, however valuable as a means for helping to unfold the deep things of God, can never be the final spiritual verdict. This demands both a wider and a more practical experience.

In the second place, the only alternative to individual literary opinion is not, as many maintain, an official verdict. The judgment of a prince of the Church is as much a private interpretation as the judgment of a commentator, with the further danger of being the fruit of more bias and less inquiry. Nor may we escape the same result by falling back upon the councils, for what is the vote of a council but a mass of private interpretations, if it has the dignity

of being an interpretation at all and not a mere echo of party cries. Even from the wise and prudent in council truth has sometimes been hidden, and how much more from the rash and violent. Truth never has been guaranteed either by position or by numbers. The decision of the largest majority cannot prove it and will not alter it. It may be hidden from the great and from the many, and be revealed to the simple in solitary meditation. By its very nature, as ever in advance of men, truth has a way of being in small minorities; and the only time it ever found perfect embodiment in the earth it was in a minority of one against the world. Nor have majorities been more infallible since. All the Church's leaders and most of their followers might be entirely united, and their opinions still be private interpretation. The difference between private and objective interpretation is in attitude, not in numbers. An interpretation warped by personal bias, tradition, formalism, prejudice, self-interest, is private, however many be agreed in it. On the other side, indifferent to party, one solitary thinker may stand, and his interpretation not be private, because it rests on the universal grounds of truth and holiness, because it is the fruit of a large and loving perception of God's gentle and patient method, and of a large and loving anticipation of the wide Kingdom of God. Then the Divine breadth and permanence may be with the one, not with the many, and one Apostolic soul, though all were faithless, would be the true representative of Christ and Christ's interests

in the Church. The interpretation of the one who stood most nearly on the same ground as the Apostles, possessing most truly the same spirit, being in the same meek service of the Lord, reflecting, as they did, the loftiest, not the most patent influences in the Church, and having their large sympathy with men, outweighs the hasty, worldly, argumentative opinions of multitudes. The true representative of the Church is not the recipient of her votes, but the possessor of her highest knowledge and noblest aspirations. Often he is one who can only reach out to thoughts he can scarce utter, much less discuss and vote on, and who can only aspire after ideals which are to him still as shadows in the grey of dawn.

Yet we may not ignore the prominence of the religious controversy in history. It is unending, always smouldering, when not ablaze. The utmost concentration of thought, keenness of interest, vigour in contending, courage in maintaining, have been expended on it. To prate of priestcraft and ascribe to it all the ill and none of the good of mankind, is not the way to understanding. The din of secular battle and the clash of worldly arms resound loud through the whole strife, but deeper, if less shrill, is to be heard the noise of the vast conflict against darkness which re-echoes through the ages. Nowhere more truly than in the arena of ecclesiastical controversy, have good soldiers of Jesus Christ contended for the truth. They have endured hardness, forsaking well-loved ease and fruitful quiet, alien-

ating dear and honoured friends, and turning the support of the great and the strong into bitter and even deadly opposition. At times, to those honest and brave souls victories have been granted by which truth has been greatly advanced; and at other times, though they have been borne down by clamour, their defeats have been more fruitful than their victories. Theirs was no private interpretation, but was of the sincerest devotion to truth and holiness, with the utter forsaking of personal prejudice and interest. To consider the differences of the creeds as of no importance, and to regard this long, eager, self-sacrificing defence of them as mere waste of human toil and suffering is to fail to see the importance in all human history, not only of men's faiths, but of their theologies. It cannot be that, either in defeat or in victory, those who contended for a higher and truer theology have suffered in vain. No consecration, no self-sacrifice, even if endured for what later ages have called mistakes, can have failed of their meed of blessing. Therefore, we have ever a certain guarantee of deliverance from private interpretation when we view the doctrines of the faith in the light of the ages which have contended most earnestly for their truth, sacrificed most for their maintenance, pondered most continually on their issues, and proved most diligently their value.

Yet the Church owes less to the times of mere theological controversy than to the times when a new life stirred within her, and when the theological controversy was only one aspect of the general

conflict with doubt and evil. Very seldom have the thoughts which widened her view of the revelation which God had given her, which enlarged her perception of the relation of Christ and Him crucified to all human endeavour, been first conceived theologically, much less defined in theological phraseology. The poet has often been nearer the sources than the theologian. And the men who lived most in the passions and enthusiasms and conflicts of their times, who felt the throb of the life around them most keenly and read its meaning most clearly, often went before either. By a keener consciousness of the fulness of the life around them and a wider sense of the love of God, they were lifted out of private interpretation of God's truth into a vision of its universality and eternity, and, if their thought did not find for itself a medium of verse, it was the stuff out of which most true poetry and all true theology was made.

CHAPTER VI

LIMITATIONS AND CERTAINTIES

Contact with reality. Systematic completeness. Seeing in a glass darkly. The rugged steep of experience. The loss and gain. The body of doctrine.

THERE have been times when men were not content to believe it impossible to find out the Almighty unto perfection. They would have no degrees of assurance, no dark places altogether without assurance. To the minutest detail was given the certainty of a Divine proclamation and the whole was arranged in a scheme, the completeness of which was almost the only proof of its reality.

In all our thinking things together we have to be as complete and systematic as we can. Reason acknowledges no voluntary limits to the perfecting of knowledge, human or Divine, short of absolute clearness and rounded system. But a steadfast loyalty to facts is apt to prescribe much narrower boundaries. In theology, in particular, the difference between the system and the narrow boundaries of ascertained fact is apt to be wide. Otherwise, instead of being the science of such Divine truth as we are able to experience, it becomes a compendium of traditional dogmas, or it is rounded off by abstract speculations. It may thus be the nearest of all knowledge to actuality or the farthest away ; it

may embrace all the facts of life, or, independent of all, appeal to the harmony of a system which, for its evidence, would need something more akin to the omniscience of the Divine mind than the slow and imperfect accumulation of knowledge imposed upon man's. It does not deal, as best it can, with what man has learned, in his journey through life, of God's way with Him, but is drawn from an idea of God's perfection which, to make the reasoning valid, must not only be regarded as existing in His nature, but also as displaying itself with a systematic completeness narrow enough to be tabulated by the human intelligence. On such demonstration no darkest recess need be left unilluminated. The attributes of God, His decrees, the whole detailed plan of salvation, the precise limits of the twofold nature of the Christ, the precise boundaries of grace and free-will, the exact proportion of the predestined and self-determined issues of life, have all been articulated into systems of finished detail. Finally, at the grave where other knowledge ends, the theologian's affirmations, delivered at last from all fear of the contradiction of facts, have attained the greatest assurance. Though a darkness so deep as the tomb might well suggest that a heavy veil of mystery between time and eternity was a necessity of our temporal existence, the Church's dogma has done more than remove the veil. It has annexed the life to come as a country where any ban or blessing of her authorizing would run with an authority denied them in this present world.

But, if this system was complete, it was also circumscribed. It looked down no vistas, it had no glimpses of Infinity. And, if it was usually confident, it was often in panic, for it was without the certainty which truth derives from being lived. Set forth apart from the living faith which cherishes it and the active love which demonstrates it, even truth itself is apt to appear incredible and at length undesirable. Reaction follows, and, as is the way of reactions, flies to the other extreme, denying all certainty of knowledge, and exalting negation as a merit. Then, because the Almighty cannot be found out to perfection, it is concluded that He cannot be found at all, and that progress is not out to new worlds of thought and up to higher certainties, but away into the dim and nebulous, undefined and undefinable.

From day to day life must be faced with a creed falling far short of omniscience. It is less an illumination than points of light in the darkness, rather lighthouses to direct the course than sun or moon to display the prospect. Except when satisfied with tradition or theory, none question the Apostle's description of our knowledge, as "seeing in a glass darkly." Even for his advanced stage of Christian experience, nothing sufficed as an analogy except his childhood. Though he has become a man, in many matters he still thinks and speaks as a child. All that may be attained is the merit of this position—to be childlike without being childish. We live in mystery, but know it to be opening mystery ; we see, as in a blurred and seamed mirror,

as in an enigma, but we know that the vision is wonderful in itself, and more wonderful in its promise. Our perplexity is not the measure of a blinded state, but the measure of a glory that shall be revealed in us. Hope that is seen is not hope, but also hope that is not in some measure seen would be mere cherishing of delusion. All the way thither may be in shadow, but at the end of the vista the light is rising. The eyes may be unsteady with straining through the darkness and tear-filled from the bitter wind, and we may have as much need to see with our heart as with our eyes, yet we see and know that it is Love which is flooding with its radiance the shady vista of our mortal hopes.

But to the heights from which we can see this rising light and trace out in some measure all the road that is illumined by it, we must climb and cannot soar. In theology, no more than in aught else, can man ascend faster or more securely than as he gains foothold. He cannot soar through the boundless air, but must climb step by step the rugged steep of experience. And if it be the right view that the goal of the world is love, and man's place in it the appointment of love, and human destiny the blessing of love, and God's method the patience of love, why should we attempt any other way? Is not our right attitude to God the attitude of finite and sinful creatures learning dimly of the Infinite and drawing near slowly to God, able only to draw near as we learn and to learn as we draw near? The truth of God cannot always have the finality of the completed result, if it

must first be in accordance with the Divine forbearance in the process. What else could make the long and hard lesson of man's life upon the earth necessary? If an irresistible influence of God's infallible Spirit, delivering to us truth not to be perverted and not to be resisted, and giving us orders not to be disobeyed, was best, why the arduous experience by which the holy men of old were enabled to receive the Divine revelation, and why are all the saints set together as helpers of each other's faith? Instead of being satisfied with weighing and comparing and cataloguing results so given, we have to recognize the need of holy living and thinking and feeling and acting for the discovery and understanding of it: and as this experience still continues, what it has to unfold cannot yet be completed. If we lack strong dogmatic certainty, we shall know that, as the slow unfolding of the truth has been the index of man's true progress in the past, it will be the only test of his progress in all time to come.

In that case, the great certainties of the Church's Creed must lie, not where the system is most completely articulated, but where the experience of the faithful is most assured. Proof texts will accomplish less, but the general purport of Scripture may accomplish more; the decision of the official Church may mean less, but the whole foundation of the Apostles and Prophets may mean more; lengthened chains of argument may appear less convincing, but what corresponds to the whole rational nature may carry greater weight. Then, if the edifice of the

faith lacks much in completeness, it will gain in stability. Truth may never in this life be of undimmed clearness and rounded fulness. Its loftiest expression may never gain rapid intellectual approval or extended popular commendation. The revelation which can only be received along with the purpose of God and the resolution to make this purpose our own, and which may come through others but brings no light till it is manifested to our own hearts, will ever be surrounded by perplexities till the certain vision of the consummation is reached. Yet, if the Church must accept a shorter creed, one which leaves to the revelation of the Great Day the elucidation of many questions, if this be what she lives, her gain will be great in security. She must learn the hard and necessary lesson that she can permanently and safely retain no article in her creed she is not able to demonstrate in her life. A scheme of truth perfected in heaven has not been granted to her, for Heaven only reveals itself as she possesses the earth, and eternal truth only demonstrates itself as the soul perceives its value for temporal guidance.

What remains may not be fittingly described as a *body* of doctrines, for that suggests completeness and system ; and the word has ever been associated with a theological method which argued from principles to facts, and not from facts to principles. But if it mean that the doctrines have living unity and power of growth and continue only while they have vitality and prove their life by giving life, then we may say that every living Church has a body of doctrine, and

that it has been growing since the first day when, amid a savage world of chaotic impulses, the first prophet arose, and obtained one follower and formed a Church to witness to some glimpse of an ordered life assured by right. Even then it was not held by dubious inference. Its certainty was of a kind different in quality from a high, even the highest degree of probability. In all ages men possessed of it have in its power and for its sake, faced torture and death with gentleness and patience, and have been made equal to the doing of the humblest service and to the bearing of the cruellest wrongs.

CHAPTER VII

THE MYSTERY OF GOD

Arranging a world. God's mystery. Good tidings to the Prophets. The way of meekness. The way of the Cross.

THAT God's truth is known to us and assured to us, only in so far as it can be tested by experience, means, in other words, in so far as it explains life. Yet, in spite of the fact that the highest energy of man's thought has been given to explaining life, we feel ourselves still beset by mystery. Every conclusion has been offered to mankind, from, all is vanity, to the best of all possible worlds. One speaks in hopeless perplexity; another in buoyant omniscience. Both find more to blame than praise.

Especially among those who commit their thoughts to writing, the tendency is to measure all things by the desires of the civilized inhabitant of the temperate zone, generally according to the standard of the upper middle class. Hence their chief perplexities are poverty, ill-health, and the temptations which spring from outward situations. Were the world theirs, they would have all incomes princely, all houses palatial, all heads hard and all pillows soft, all dispositions charming and all circumstances propitious. Like the dying Scharnhorst they sigh for one day of command. Were it granted, they would transform society into a beneficent club, housing

mankind in the Mall, with Kent in front for a garden and the Trossachs behind for a pleasure ground. Then they think life would bear its meaning on its face.

Of this ideal Omnipotence has clearly come short. God's thoughts, however, may not be as our thoughts, but may be as high above the thoughts of the wisest of us as the heavens are above the earth. God's purpose may not be to make us fed beasts of the most gorgeous, best filled stall, but limitation and even failure in this lower good may be a necessary compulsion to turn our regard to the higher.

The Apostle on his lonely Patmos, with nothing of the fulness of life around him, nothing but rock and sea and sky, dared to call experience the Mystery of God. He found it a mystery, not an inscrutable secret—a secret indeed, but only hidden that we might the more eagerly seek it, hidden that we might not find it till we were prepared to cherish it. That it is a mystery waiting solution is, the Apostle declares, the good tidings which God has declared from the beginning to His servants the Prophets. The whole task of revelation has been to keep alive this hope and to begin the initiation by putting men on the road to the full and final solution. • The good tidings which God has declared to His servants the Prophets, to all servants of His who have the prophetic spirit, have only been varieties of the assurance that the mystery will in good time be ended, nay that even now it is unfolding. Somewhere, there await us the answers to all our questions, the justi-

fication for all our sorrows, the explanation of all our delays. At times the prophets have caught glimpses of the dawn, as the breath of God for a moment rolled up the curtain of the mist, and seen that, not life, nor its strange opposite death, not failure, even to the extent of being cast aside from the uses of life, not pain, even the most poignant which is remorse, will fail of finding its explanation when the sun rises over our horizon. With this assurance, men in the hardest lot of life, hungry, thirsty, naked, having no certain dwelling-place, buffeted, reviled, persecuted, defamed, made as the refuse of the world and the offscouring of all things, have found experience the opening mystery of God, and been enabled to see life not, as might have been thought, as a rock and heather-bound croft maintained with wet brow and bent back on the frontier of chaos, but as an illimitable kingdom of a hope, large enough to embrace all varieties of experience and varied enough to harmonize all its opposites.

How, we may well ask, could they cherish a thought of life so great, when so many, even amid the abundant enjoyment of the good things of this life, occupy the earth with deepening sadness and look forward to the future with oppressive dubiety? But their hope in the promise of life had no dependence on its possessions. They looked, not at the things in life which are seen, but at the things which are unseen. By accepting the discipline of life, they penetrated in some measure to its meaning, and, by doing its duties, they were led steadily forward

towards its goal. Thus they were taught that all things are of God and through God and unto God. This great result was accomplished for them by the discovery that meekness was more than a submission of their own will, and was a triumphant discovery of the method of God. Dim the knowledge may have been, a reflection in a distorted mirror, the inadequate perception of an imperfect obedience. Yet they were delivered from the fear that meekness would make them as much the victims of Divine as of human administration, meekness for them being the discovery that God will only govern man by the same gentle method He requires of man, that He seeks no submission He is not Himself continually giving, and that to accept life's discipline and be loyal to life's duties is to enter into perfect freedom and, therefore, into its Kingdom, which is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Then the central fact of experience and the central fact of revelation are found to be one. God's tolerance is the key to experience and history. The central fact of human life is God's patience. He will not force His mystery on us. He will lead us up to it. Violence is the destruction, the contradiction, the absolute opposite of this mystery. Even the greatest human might belongs to the things seen; the meek acceptance of God's will to the things unseen. God's tolerance is not like man's. It is not mere endurance of what we ourselves think right or not very far wrong. It is real tolerance—the recognition of the freedom of the possessor of a mind and

conscience to err, the determination not to replace man's own dim search for light and man's own vacillating discipline of a wayward will even by omniscient wisdom and omnipotent righteousness. The things seen, as far as they are seen, are passing shadows ; and what God values and makes eternal is the immortal soul of them, the faith and hope and love they cherish, the purity and endurance and loyalty and service they call forth. By no easier right of possession can this be won than by the insight of enlightened souls and the acceptance of willing hearts. With this aim of the Divine rule before us, our way may still be dark, but light is sown for the righteous.

With this interpretation of experience the supreme fact of revelation agrees. The supreme revelation of the mystery of God, the supreme assurance that it awaits the perfect solution of love, is the Cross. In the centre of all human error and failure, all perplexity and misery, all degradation and death, the Divine compassion suffers, the just for the unjust, a proclamation to all the ages that God takes all suffering and failure and sin to His heart, and that He will do everything for man, except what love cannot do, override his will. The Cross is the consummation of all revelation because it displays the Divine method, not as the masterful compulsion of power, but as the condescending, patient, self-sacrificing device of an infinitely tolerant and wise love. It is a love which hates sin, yet for the sake of having a kingdom of sons and not of slaves,

through all the centuries pitifully endures it. It is a love which can limit no working of any law of righteousness, yet will neglect no device and spare no sacrifice to bring man into the peace and blessedness of the truth he himself sees and of the rightness he, of his own choice, gladly secures.

History and personal experience alike are extended commentaries on its teaching, and no one has learned the lesson till he can give thanks for the wise and detailed knowledge of his need, which has crossed his desires, repressed his ambitions, limited his demands, cast down his hopes, arrested his labours by sickness, and interrupted his friendships by death. God forbid, man must be able to say, that I should boast save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, whereby the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world, till the world and self alike, all outward conflict and inward strife, speak, like the Cross of Christ itself, of higher, holier ambitions, continually cherished for us by a love which seeks all good for us, and which seeks it not by the destruction but by the discipline of the wayward will.

CHAPTER VIII

FOUR VEILS

Ignorance, sin, weakness, evanescence. Their removal. Metaphysical dogmas. Doctrines of the present Kingdom of God.

LIFE does not bear its true meaning on its face, yet this meaning is not a secret. It is only a mystery, an open secret. It cannot be forced open by the mightiest self-love, but it opens of itself to the lightest touch of love. Of the Divine love, which is the sure clue ever to be followed through all life's windings in the dark, the supreme revelation is the Cross. By it is displayed the forbearance and the self-sacrifice of the love which has so long endured evil that man might still live in the opportunities of freedom, yet which, short of withdrawing this first supreme gift, will do everything for man to deliver him from the evil he has wrought. The way of the Cross is needed, if man is to be delivered from evil by the arduous, but only blessed way, of being set free with the glorious liberty of the children of God, and cannot be helped by enslaving him even to the righteous will of another, even to the righteous will of God. It is the revelation that experience, in spite of all wickedness and woe, is directed to the ends of love and may be a Kingdom of God and not a mere tyranny, a mere autocracy of darkness, a

mere haphazard of conflicting accidents and conflicting passions.

But, like the inquirer into the ancient religious mysteries, we stand before this Divine mystery enshrouded in thick veils which allow us only the dimmest, most uncertain vision. They are our ignorance, our sin, our weakness, and our evanescence.

First, a heavy veil of ignorance surrounds us. In every direction, when we put out our hand, we touch it. We have no knowledge which does not speedily arrive at blank ignorance. At the moment when we seem to be drawing near the secret, we meet with darkness. Nature has her secrets which she jealously guards. We cannot penetrate to the secret of matter, to the secret of life, to the secret of our own personality. And if the very world we see, the life we live, the spirit we call ourselves, enshroud themselves in darkness, how shall we know the Eternal Spirit or reach His ultimate purpose in all things? Are we not left to the old conclusion that clouds and thick darkness are the habitation of His throne? How then may we, whose knowledge is bounded by such narrow limits of time and space, obtain a steady view of God's purpose infinite and eternal? How may we, who err so often in the commonest things, who misunderstand so continually our own aims, who misjudge so often even our own material profit, obtain, amid the present long delays, so much as a dim practical assurance of the final triumph, or, amid all the turnings of our earthly journey, fix our eyes upon any Divine goal? How, even for our

practical faith, shall we perceive that truth and righteousness and peace, and not clouds and thick darkness, are the habitation of God's throne?

Secondly, the soul is enshrouded by sin. God's purpose and method are obscured to us by our opposition as well as by our ignorance. The glimpses we catch through the veil of our ignorance, instead of making us eager for fuller knowledge, make us fear that fuller knowledge would only show more clearly our own alienation. Sin is the rejection of God's purpose, the practical denial of it. It is the absolute contradiction of God's mystery, and unfits the soul for knowing what it cannot love.

Thirdly, to this unrighteous bias of the heart is added weakness of will. As sin makes God's purpose seem hostile, weakness makes it seem incredible. How may man look forward to a Kingdom of God while his own soul is in anarchy? How can he anticipate a world subdued to the perfect rule of love, in which he has attained his freedom in absolute victory over evil without and within, while a fleshy appetite can subject him to its slavery, or a gross physical attraction ruin him soul and body? If man cannot assure himself of victories near and small, of the conquest of his lust and his greed, of the subjection of his own evil imaginations, if feebly he submits to the worse while he sees the better, how may he maintain his hope in the Kingdom of the blessed and the free?

Lastly, even were this hope of God's ultimate purpose assured, and man could see it through all the veils of his ignorance and sin and weakness, what

would it avail for him when his days are so few that he can never hope to live to see any of it realized, when his certain fate, ere any of it may come, is death and corruption? Were he eternal, he might trace some purpose in this long struggle, this slow progress of the centuries. The development of the race might then point for him to the evolution of the Kingdom of God. He might then look with hope for the day when conscience would have advanced to be a surer and a holier guide, when man's will would obtain a firmer poise, and when a wider range of thought would seize the vastness of the Divine purpose and method. But when that has come to pass, what concern will it be of his, when he has returned to dust and there is no memory of all he did under the sun?

Enshrouded by these four veils man stands before the mystery of God. By four great Christian doctrines they are taken away. The veil of our ignorance is removed by the Incarnation, the veil of our sin by the Atonement, the veil of our weakness by Grace, the veil of our evanescence by Immortality. If God manifests Himself in our human form, even the ignorance of the unlearned need be no hindrance; if God Himself reconciles us to Himself, our practical denial of His purpose may not ultimately hinder us from knowing it and loving it; if God Himself is our strength, no weakness need make us despair of the highest victory; and if in God we live eternally, the shortness of our earthly life does not deny us our share in the final glory.

Yet we can only, as it were, see the hands that pluck away the veil. We only know these works of God as we know all His other works, by what they accomplish for us. The moment we forget their practical demonstration, and regard them as metaphysical dogmas, we enter upon the most debatable of all human inquiries. Regarding the meaning and the scope of these doctrines as they appear in God's sight, Christian teachers in every age and of every sect have debated and differed. But the reason is not that the unveiling of our souls is doubtful, but that we are striving after a knowledge which may be interesting but is not essential. Instead of looking at the mystery of God and recognizing that the veil has been removed because we see, we turn round to try to discover how it was done, and argue about it till we fear it is all a mistake. We think we ought to perceive them as doctrines of the Eternal Kingdom when all things are perfected, as doctrines of God's absolute truth ; whereas they are for us doctrines merely of the present experience of God, doctrines of God's truth in human relations. Regarded in this way, measured by their effect in unveiling to us the mystery of God, looked upon as ways by which God delivers us from the tyranny of darkness to translate us into the Kingdom of the Son of His Love, they are no more the most debatable of metaphysical abstractions, but revelations of the Divine which have their most practical demonstration in experience.

CHAPTER IX

IGNORANCE AND INCARNATION

Speculations. The real demonstration. The manifestation of the Father. Result in power and in peace.

No subject has afforded wider scope for speculation than the manifestation of the Divine in human form. From early ages men's thoughts have dwelt on it. In Christianity the differences have been many, the heat of controversy violent. No conceivable question has remained undiscussed ; and every discussion has shaken the Church to her foundations. These questions still abide ; and we may not to-day, any more than in the past, refuse to any inquiring soul the right to reflection on the pre-existence of Christ, the sameness of the Divine substance, the threefold presentation of the one God, the heavenly relations of Father and Son, the respects in which the Son emptied Himself to narrow His infinity to human nature, the relation of the Divine in Him to the human, the limitation of the omniscient knowledge to human thought, of the omnipotent will to human temptation. But while we may not deny to anyone the right to speculate on all these questions, we may also be without much expectation of convincing result. The times when the Church has been most dogmatic on such matters have never been greatly distinguished for fruitfulness either in thought or

action. And were such speculations capable of yielding us practical fruit in the knowledge of God, were it possible for us to see any working of the Divine Mind from His throne above, would it ever have been necessary at all to teach us, like children at God's footstool, the mystery of godliness by the condescending manifestation of God in the flesh? For beings who could sit inside the heavenly council and differentiate the Divine essence and map out the Divine scheme, an Incarnation were a superfluity.

Yet the spiritual life cannot, any more than the natural, be advancing in the scale by becoming invertebrate. In the right, the useful, the immediately practical knowledge of God, we ought to be growing in clearness and certainty. And the Incarnation to be of profit, must help us in this progress, and not merely perplex us by doubtful speculations. The mystery is open for godliness, not for speculation. Not as we discuss the relation of the Divine and the human, but as we attain to the image of God which is the ideal of our human nature, does its perfect manifestation in Jesus Christ receive its demonstration. The assurance that He and the Father are one requires the steadfast endeavour to conform our perverse wills to this harmony. The proof that the Son came from the bosom of the Father to declare Him unto us, depends on whether, with the spirit of sons, we are reaching up towards the knowledge of the Father. The perplexity and difficulty lie in this, that God's

thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor His ways as our ways. Ours are thoughts and ways of self-love ; His are thoughts and ways of love. The two belong to different realms, to different worlds. Wherefore it can only be in proportion as we hear the call, " Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts," that we can discern—and, not then after the way of speculation, but after the way of faith, which however is the way of the large vision of love—something of the ways and thoughts which are high as the place from which it is not given to any of us to look down, but to which it is given to all of us to look up. As the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is of a different quality from all we describe as glory and the transfiguration of all we would shun, until this transfiguration begins to shed its glory into our own hearts, we are without the means of discerning how far it exceeds the glory which is of self-exaltation. Not till it touches us with the love the proof whereof is the human proof of giving freely what only love could endure the cost of, till by this love it lightens duty and cheers despondency, till it comforts in trial and shows how all the incidents of this changeful life are of gracious appointment, till it displays to us that we are governed by a Power as perfect in wisdom as in love, are we in the way of discerning anything more than a mere vague something of the Divine in a more than usually perfect man. But the life which is such a transforming manifestation of the Divine love is for us a revelation of the fulness of

God, which is so real and so sure that, whatsoever uncertainty there may be about the details of its record, we cannot doubt that it is from the Governor of the world and the Maker of our spirits. What reveals to us the true Divine glory of the unselfish will, and abolishes the small fleeting glories of the selfish will, can never be doubtful.

In the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth man has won at once a nearer and a loftier conception of God. On this revelation of the Father he may now rest his hopes and his affections. Others have taught us of God, but have left Him a vast, inconceivable abstraction, just with the justice which knows nothing of the opposition which alone gives value to human justice, and good with the goodness which can know nothing of the self-sacrifice which alone gives merit to human goodness. God is left a Being whose nature may be Love, but who can give no proof of it by patience, forbearance and help amid the limitations which are the evidence of our human affections. But when Jesus manifests the Father, not by abstract description of the Eternal, but by a life among common men, wherein His holiness surmounts every form of the temptation to consider self, the proof of the Divineness of the revelation lies near, and the God we discover by it is not afar off. He is a God Whose goodness is like the ideal of our own, manifesting Himself in one Who is just amid all injustice and temptation to consider His own interest, who in the deepest poverty is of unspeakable compassion, who in the

hour of His darkest agony could abound in personal sympathy and even in consideration for the unworthy. This is a manifestation of the Father to be best proved in the life of duty and temptation, and to be best known to the soul that has most earnestly put it to the test of daily struggle and daily aspiration.

Men are not all able to give a name to their thoughts about this Man, but if faith in Him always means power in conflict and peace in trial, they must in their heart of hearts give Him the name that is above every name. What may His name be whose presence means for man the ability to unite in the thought of God His justice and His mercy, and to unite in the service of God fear and the love which casts out fear, and whose life sets before man the highest standard of purity and holiness, and delivers him from the despair with which he has so long regarded the lowest? Who is He that has made man at once humbler and stronger, more meek and more daring, more considerate of all men and less afraid of any man?

CHAPTER X

SIN AND ATONEMENT

Conflicting views. The inadequacy of analysis. A far-sighted insurance. Experience from within. Love suffers and unworthiness profits.

To those who place the authority of the Church in the foreground, an atonement is a simple matter of an infinite personality taking the place of many of limited value ; while to those who place the current conceptions of human responsibility in the foreground, it refines itself away into the moral influence of a singularly self-denying life. But, even when the doctrine is contemplated in its wide Divine and human applications, it is apt to end in a maze of abstract principles and general relations. The inquirer who feels the want of something more satisfying than an authoritative assurance and something deeper than mere example, asks what necessity of the Divine Government demands it, and what need in human nature requires it. The task set before him is to discover how such a doctrine can agree with the unlimited love which is the highest certainty in God's nature, and with individual responsibility which is the highest certainty in man's. No view can satisfy which, by setting God on one side and man apart on the other, so explains the doctrine as to do violence at once to God's love and man's

responsibility. As for the orthodox scheme of Divine salvation, it is not convincing to the intellect or the conscience or the heart, and may even arouse the active opposition of all three to what is at once a niggardly display of God's goodness and a shuffling with the stern facts of individual responsibility.

Yet, while all abstract presentations of this doctrine lie open more or less to these objections, the presentation of the Apostles remains ever attractive and persuasive. Wherein does this amazing difference consist? Why is a doctrine which, expressed in a friendly letter, seems so entirely rational and convincing, so supremely worthy of God's goodness and so entirely adequate to man's need, when expressed, apparently with accuracy, in abstract, scientific, theological language, so antagonistic and repellent to the highest belief we have in God and our highest conception of the nature of man?

Is not the very simple answer that the theologian always deals with the doctrine from without, and the Apostle always looks at it from within? No human relationship is free from irrationality when viewed otherwise than from within. What, for example, could be less convincing than an abstract discussion of the family? Seen in the gracious light of human affection, it is the inmost sanctuary of moral relations, yet who that had never heard of it save through scientific analysis would imagine it was more than the outer court of animal instinct? Something essential to the picture is always wanting when it is not drawn from the inside, but is examined

from the outside in the cold light of self-interested association. The higher the relationship the greater the danger of misrepresentation, the more dreary and disfiguring the caricature. Naturally, the relation of a holy God to His sinful children, being highest, has suffered most. The very relation which, seen from within, most shows itself by its truth and beauty to be the highest manifestation of love, can be degraded into a mere legal bargain. Would we try to reach it by any other way than by being ourselves children of the Father who sends His rain upon the evil and upon the good, would we approach Him without any of the sorrow for the sins of a brother which silences indignation, would we be forgiven without ourselves learning to forgive, by mere personal self-regarding anxiety, we only attain at best something of the nature of a far-sighted and adequate insurance against possible calamity. In this form it can be held with the greatest tenacity, along with a narrow, selfish and even worldly view of life; and concentration of devotion upon it may only be the measure of the blindness of the spiritual perceptions. Yet it is no argument against the highest relationships that they are capable of being turned to most abuse. Nor is it a reason for doubting their true dependence upon the noblest elements of our nature, that the perverse may cherish them from considerations of calculated selfishness. Circumscribed by the presuppositions of self-interest, the Atonement is reduced to a selfish and immoral trust. But, in being capable of suffering this perversion,

it does not differ from any other manifestation of love. What may be relied on like a father's love for his child, yet what is so base as a selfish calculation of the strain it will bear? To a deliberate estimate of it by the errors it will overlook and the debts it will pay, it is apt to appear at one time stern and hard and another soft and sentimental. To a better understanding, however, and a nobler trust, its goodness is never in conflict with reasonableness and righteousness.

Love cannot be interpreted from the outside. All that can be done from without is to attempt to translate it into terms of self-love, which is necessarily to obscure and pervert it. Not till we find ourselves in a larger, fairer world, where the supreme certainty is of a different nature, where a golden chain links God to man, and love, not self-love, is the first certainty, can we perceive the meaning and the glory of God's Atonement for sinful man. In this strange new world, where to gain our life is to lose it, we are but little at home. There the best of men are only newcomers and learners. Yet we cannot have any of God's love without understanding in some measure the unity and solidarity between Creator and creature, by which goodness suffers and unworthiness profits. Whatever else may remain uncertain, it is no longer possible to doubt that God Himself is the fountain-head of all work of saving and expiating. To measure and formulate it may be far beyond our reach. Not having always known the earthly things of our common human affections,

how can we be assured of knowing the heavenly things of the Divine love? Yet, as our own life enters into this new world, where love is the supreme law, we shall ever more joyously perceive the emancipation from the guilt and stain of sin which the sufferings of the Christ of God, who is also the Head of every man, have accomplished. The benefit of it we accept as we accept a mother's tears and prayers, as something our selfishness has required but which henceforward, we trust, our selfishness shall never shame.

Nor may such a blessing remain with ourselves. By the very nature of the deliverance, it sinks our personal gain in an urgent sense of the world's need, for to have profited by the Atonement of love must teach something of love's wide fellowship and of the blessings of love's service. Then we stand before the mystery of life with one more veil removed, and we behold in it a Kingdom of God which even man's sin cannot hinder. Then we see it as a doctrine of the Kingdom more clearly than we have seen it as a doctrine for our personal need, for we see that a work and sacrifice of love is the only deliverance that can be offered in a Kingdom of the free.

CHAPTER XI

WEAKNESS AND GRACE

Place of the human will beside the Absolute. The experience of grace. Enlarging vision of the Divine patience. The clue to knowledge.

NOTHING seemed so well fitted to be a subject of enduring debate for eternal misery as the place of the human will beside the Absolute. Nor on earth have we made much more advance in deciding the question than when the rebel angels in the nether darkness

"reasoned high,
Of providence, foreknowledge, will and fate,
Fixed fate, free-will, foreknowledge absolute,
And found no end in wandering mazes lost."

Man we see standing in weakness before forces, of might and subtlety beyond his power. Yet how can he endure the help of God without suffering annihilation? And how, on the other hand, can he be free and God absolute? Can a God in whom are all things and by whom are all things, nothing of whose purpose fails, suffer the guidance of any part of His universe to be put in jeopardy by the sin or even the error of a finite creature? Must not the very first necessity of His rule stand in hard contrast, alien and opposite, to the thought of a human personality of limited, but uncontrolled dominion, who has in

his own choice and resolution, not merely the destinies of his own soul, but the additional responsibility of a large influence upon the happiness or misery of others? If two such dominions exist, must they not face each other, for ever unreconcilable? How may God be God without seeing the end from the beginning, or how may His government be for a moment at the mercy of a finite and a perverse will? Or how, on the other hand, may any created being find any suggestion of Infinite wisdom or any aid of Infinite power less than irresistible?

But again we are not satisfied to know that another veil is taken away because we see better the mystery of God. We would fain know by seeing how it is removed. The working of Grace, however, cannot be known before we have experience of it. We cannot, without rising to the height of its embrace, determine how it enfolds us. But then we find it singularly free from perplexity. Without any sense of incompatibility, we are enabled to place the largest value that may be assigned to anything finite, upon man's free choice, and at the same time to assign an absolute value to the Will that embraces all things. By experience of their working, the seeming opposites are found to be agreed. The sense of God's aid and man's responsibility are found to increase together. When we are most delivered from vanity, by the consciousness that by the grace of God we are what we are, we are brought under a profounder sense of our responsibility for every thought as well as every deed.

This result is not reached, as may be too hastily concluded, merely by ignoring the questions and quiescently accepting an illogical situation. On the contrary, it is reached by an enlarging vision of God's patience. There is no opposition between the Divine government and human freedom. God's patience is great enough to be capable both of holding sacred human resolve and of acknowledging no failure. The might which is irresistible, because it breaks what it cannot bend, is not the greatest. The experience of grace discovers an omnipotence of still greater reach and splendour, because it is directed by the manifold wisdom of God. This wisdom spares no sacrifice, is omniscient in all patience of device, so adapts the gift to the receiver that no effort, no longing is left unaided, yet the weakest is only helped to strength, and the personal resolve even of the basest is not overridden.

The experience of this wise and considerate grace, of this forbearing method of the love which will not break the bruised reed or quench the smoking flax, may not afford a scientific explanation of the origin and persistence of evil and of its widespread and malign influence over the hearts and lives of men. It may not even satisfy our human expectation, which is apt to associate absolute power and goodness with instant suppression of wrong and with effectiveness through peremptoriness. Yet the experience of grace is more than a measure of practical trust in the wisdom as well as the power of the Divine succour. It shows also what His

wisdom and power are. So long as power means for us what it meant for the rebel angels, nothing beyond the exercise of irresistible violence, we shall ever err in the question of predestination and free-will "in wandering mazes lost." But the willing and obedient spirit is lifted up to the bosom of a love, the might of which is proved, as much by the respect it pays to the limited dominion it has conferred on every individual, as by establishing its own dominion of righteousness. For this, wisdom is power. What would make man at once righteous and free is not the force which would subdue to an ungracious submission, but the omniscient devices of self-sacrifice to win the free consent of the heart. This is not the weakness of a limited Deity, but should be regarded as the highest evidence of Omnipotence. The hymn of praise which is called forth by the experience of grace is not "Who hath resisted His might?" but "O the depths both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His riches, and His ways past finding out!" Then all difference ends, for however violent may be their disagreement in argument, where are the truly devout Arminian and Calvinist who differ in praise?

CHAPTER XII

EVANESCENCE AND ETERNAL LIFE

An academic advice. Silence of the Old Testament. The sense of forever and forever. The great secret. Now have we eternal life. The resurrection of the body.

OF all the academic advices offered to a struggling world, the exhortation to limit all hopes and aspiration to this present life is the most futile. Were it never necessary to stand beside the mouldering clay, knowing that those features will no more respond to the touch of the soul we loved that once dwelt within, and, were the reminders of our own departure less obtrusive than disease and decay, much might be done by the resolute will, and yet more by diligent preoccupation and distraction. Yet, were it possible, it would not be rational to neglect the most certain event in life. Until some purpose is discovered in death or some hope beyond it, however much we may strive to forget its presence, life is ever shadowed by this certain tragedy.

The natural tendency of the human mind is rather to believe that a region whither so many dear friends have journeyed, and from which every one expects some day his own summons, cannot be utterly unknown. As the dark veil will not lift, however much men peer or question, the void has been furnished with desires and hopes, which, once they

have received shape and colour in imagination, appear to be unquestioned realities. Wherefore, there is little difference among the religions of mankind in the existence of such a belief. What distinguishes them is the quality of it. By nothing is the Hebrew faith more distinguished than by an almost entire absence of this imaginative transference of life's desires and hopes to the other world. This absence is the more impressive that the Hebrew prophets were endowed with the highest gifts of imagination. Nor could they have lacked the seed-corn of suggestion. The nations around them spoke with more confidence of the realm of the departed than of the peoples living on their borders. The cause was neither lack of imagination nor absence of the necessary suggestion to stimulate its working, but a more truthful and pious discrimination between the things revealed and the things not revealed. More than any other people, the pious Hebrews lived for the future. Above all other men, the Prophets manifested the power of an endless life, triumphing over time's allurements, and indifferent to all mortal threats. The men who lived thus, with an overwhelming sense of forever and forever, had no need to speak much of eternal life. Among other races, the anticipation was definite but barren ; with them it was dim but fruitful. Nor is the reason hard to find. To others, the future only gave the credulously received sanction of their hopes and desires ; to them it furnished the assured triumph of their principles. Their hope was of truly religious acquies-

cence and of truly religious assurance. It was a moral discipline as much in what it concealed as in what it revealed, surmounting the supreme religious difficulty, which has ever been to purify the hope, not to quicken it, to make it the sanction of our righteous resolution, not the perpetuation of our secular desires.

The thick darkness, out of which we come and into which we journey, must have its gracious purpose. Mankind is eager for knowledge of what lies beyond. But were it not denied him, our present life would cease to be our immediate sphere of discipline and duty. The glory might dazzle, or the length of the journey might dismay. Seeing that God has placed us in the present, it cannot be piety to attempt to live in the future. Here we stand face to face with a mystery which levels all intelligence and all authority, the scientist no further forward than the washerwoman, the Pope's Bull running precisely the same distance as the workman's malediction. Even the ever burning lake, the purifications of the Intermediate State, the golden streets of the Heavenly City, are but imaginative embodiments of principles, of which the corresponding realities are beyond our reach ; and when they become material, they cease to be spiritual, or even moral.

This modesty, befitting time, has not always marked ecclesiastical interpretations of the Church's hope. In the Apostolic presentation, however, it is never absent. Which of the Apostles so much as attempts to strike the balance between God's

patience and man's obduracy, between a human nature capable of ever increasing degradation, yet in its worst degradation susceptible to good, and a goodness which must eternally seek to bless, but which cannot bless in indifference to the holiness which is the supreme blessing? They speak from this side, not from beyond. They do not profess to know the state of the departed, for "we know not what we shall be." They are content to leave many things till the day shall declare them, and only attempt to show us the paths of life which lead over the horizon of time. They boldly place together such certainties as the boundless calamity of sin and the boundless love of God, because they have experienced both, not because they have seen the ultimate reconciliation. The hope is not thereby made weak, but it can only be cherished as it gives power and elevation and purity to every situation and every duty of life.

Our true hope rests on this discovery that now we have eternal life. However suddenly the road we are on may dip over the hill into the unknown country beyond, it leads forward; and our confidence to advance by it into the Future can only rightly depend on how we have been treading it in the past. Utterly different the Future may be from all we have experienced. It may be in still greater contrast to all we have anticipated. Immeasurably it may be beyond even our most daring imagination. Yet the Christian hope has this assurance that it admits of no strong dividing line between this life

and another. As both are of God, they cannot be wholly different as spheres of learning and service. Our assurance is that Christ is our life here, and that He will equally be our life in all other spheres. "We know not what we shall be, but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." Thus time and eternity are linked together, the great end in both being to purify ourselves even as He is pure.

By this purpose we should interpret the idea of the resurrection of the body. Interpreted materially it is nothing more than a stumbling block and a perplexity. St. Paul carefully distinguishes it from the resurrection of the flesh. Whatever abiding reality there may be in matter, the doctrine had no connection in his mind with the gathering of material particles from earth and sea, and the apportioning of them among the rival claimants. The hope is presented to us to help us in the present ; and by the present life it must be interpreted. It is not a prediction of a remarkable physical phenomenon, but is an assurance that the discipline of this mortal flesh, which is a task of our mortal state so urgent and so difficult, is of eternal importance. It embodies a truth of the highest value for the conduct of life, a deliverance at once from dry asceticism and from debasing impurity. It is a hope which gives greatness to every relation of life and to every phase of duty, sanctifying all and ennobling all. The sense of forever and forever is thus given to the whole of life. The veil of our evanescence no more surrounds us,

and we can contemplate with joy and hope a Kingdom of God, now in the faith and hope of those who live by its promise, and to be fulfilled perfectly in a rule that accepts no obedience which is not free and exercises no compulsion which is not of love. In the assurance that, however imperfectly we know it, it perfectly knows us, and that we live in a world directed to its end, we have now eternal life ; and the only fulfilment it needs is that we should know it as perfectly as it knows us.

CHAPTER XIII

OPENING AND SHUTTING

A valid standard. Opposite spirit and view. The true and the high. Peter's insight and Peter's confession.

THE faith to which the promise is in every age renewed, that it will open that none may shut and shut that none may open, is the faith which interprets this world by the insight of love, sees in it the promise of a Kingdom of God, and discerns the truth of this hope by being delivered from the ignorance which hides from us God's purpose, the sin which alienates us from it, the weakness which discourages us from hoping for it, and the evanescence which forbids us any part or lot in it. The person who has it opens and shuts, not because of any dignity in himself or any power to alter God's will conferred upon him, but because he opens according to truth and shuts according to knowledge. He has not been granted any key of ecclesiastical authority, but he has the key which is more valid both for time and for eternity, the only key that will open as God opens and shut as He shuts. If it is the final truth of God and no mere superficial accuracy respecting some detail of His plan, if it is an understanding of God's purpose as it actually exists and as it displays itself to those who will to do God's will, the ban and the blessing of it will be as valid

for eternity as for time. No priestly key is then needed either by Peter or the humblest Christian. Their claim is at once more modest and more trustworthy, being the humble knowledge of the eternal purposes of God through Jesus Christ.

In spite of all progress in civilization, we can no more, walking by sight, discern the purpose of life to be of God's love, than in any former age. The inquiries of our time seem to lead far away from the revelation of God as our Father. Annihilation is offered to us as the only atonement, not merely for sin, but for error. An absolute reign of mechanical law is offered us instead of the personal succour of a personal God. Man is looked on as lying down in the grave and not rising up, his hope perishing with the life of his body. Not only is the Christian view of life denied, but the Christian spirit, which alone can hold it, is rejected. In consequence those who have set their hope on the things that are above often turn away from what is, not only alien and uncongenial, but seems mere wicked negation, to seek, in utter indifference to the inquiries of our time, to live in a faith which has a less troubled origin than experience.

But faith is the antithesis of obscurantism, and truth shows itself true by fearing no inquiry. This age also must have its own revelation of God's purpose, and the certainty that we have understood this purpose can only be assured in this age, as in every other age, by using it as a clue through the difficulties of present experience. But of all undivine ways of

opposing inquiry, none is worse than to resist it by a narrow and mechanical conception of the Church and by an unspiritual appeal to its visible authority. Surely our supreme need is a heart of wider charity, for, if there is any way by which we may hope to escape from the perplexities which beset us, it must be by the forbearance and the patience of love. This does not set assertion against assertion, but meets inquiry by inquiry. Instead of denouncing inquiry as the sin of rebellion, it urges more patience, more humility, and more charity. It does not ask that doctrines be accepted merely by not daring to question them, but it asks for the exercise of the Christian temper of patience and reverence and love. In this there can have been no mistake, for by no other way can there be entrance into life's deepest meaning. Conclusions of science or philosophy, even if they seem to contradict its assurance, it will still consider. They may be a conclusion drawn from a certain limited range of facts, and shed light on them ; they may be a stage on the way to ultimate truth. But if it know this ultimate truth to be greater, it will urge a fuller investigation and a wider generalization. One thing it is sure of : nothing that belittles man's nature, nothing that lowers his ideal of duty, nothing that weakens the sanction of obligation, nothing that makes him satisfied to eat and drink for to-morrow he dies, can ever be the final truth, or even true progress in knowledge.

The highest must eternally be the truest. If we have developed from the low to the high, the highest

must ever be before us, no vain imagination, but the reality by which we are being lifted up. In distinguishing the highest we may easily be mistaken, yet it can never be doubtful that truth is higher and more glorious than anything we could put in its place. Wherefore, the ultimate power for discerning truth is not intellectual acuteness, but is spiritual insight. Without neglecting any fact, without denying any just inference, we must continually be seeking to penetrate to the highest and the holiest. And if once more we find that, by following the blessed footsteps of the Master, we are guided to light, we have added also our testimony that His word is truth. Already a higher conception of God's creation, a vaster sense of His providence, a more exalted view of His Kingdom have been won in this conflict with much opposition and doubt. We have reason to be assured that so long as the Spirit of Truth speaks to the hearts of men in the name of Christ, the Church of the Saints will be equal to the high task of preserving and applying all the essential doctrines of the faith. The spiritual inheritance she has received she will hand on, not diminished by the wear and stress of time, but, enriched by man's varied experience and tested by helping at least to solve the problems of every age.

BOOK IV
THE CHURCH'S ORGANIZATION

CHAPTER I

THE TASK

The test of action. Not merely against inadequate philosophy, but against powers of wickedness. Amid actual stress and secularity of life, with weak mortals as agents. Must warn and convert, and succour and guide.

THE aspect of the present unrest which causes so many faithful souls the gravest anxiety is not so much any doubt that the faith of Christ can ultimately maintain its place, as that the authority of the actual Church, as it now exists, may be weakened, to the great injury of a generation only too ready to turn liberty into licence. It seems to them that, for the mass of men, a concrete authority outside of themselves is needed, an authority, in face of which there is neither duty nor right of personal inquiry.

The enterprise of the Church is not merely against an inadequate philosophy. Her creed is not offered for the purpose of intellectual discussion or as a subject of high contemplation for spirits detached from the allurements of desire, but must be maintained in the teeth of the world's creed of the immediate advantage of present gratification. If when her creed was surest, most sharply defined, least questioned, the Church had a hard struggle to gain practical acceptance against an enemy which has its most dangerous ally in man's own appetites

and passions, how will it fare with her, if she can only ask for further inquiry from those who do not inquire at all and can only appeal to spiritual insight, the absence of which is the chief cause of her troubles?

Must there not then be an actual organization, like the State, with an accepted authority, if the Church is to do her work amid the actual facts of life? Is not wickedness constantly organizing itself? Does it not seek to gain for itself every temporal advantage? May not the Church's enemy still be described as the powers of wickedness in high places? Ought not the Church, therefore, also to seek a position of power and influence, of visibility and resource, which would make her a force to be reckoned with in any struggle for truth and righteousness? If this be the cause for which she truly stands, can she ever have too high a place, or be girded with too great might, or be of too compact organization, or have too visible a guarantee of her authority? If she is to deal with the actual stress and secularity of life, must she not have a worldly as well as a heavenly policy, directed by men of practical experience in affairs and administrative ability, with sufficient authority behind them to compel obedience?

Besides, even her agents are not immortal and pure spirits, ever wrapt in the contemplation of the high and the holy and ever obedient to the most secret whisper of duty. On the contrary, she must do her work with such poor material as may be

found among erring mortals. Selfishness is far from being entirely eradicated from their hearts, and they are not altogether emancipated from worldly motive. They are capable of failing in weakness or folly or captiousness. Their ambitions and their quarrelsomeness might be the strongest allies of the foe. What unity, what authority, what voice of imperious command can be too clear or too decided for directing and ruling agents so defective, so as to assure that the Church's work shall be, even after an imperfect human fashion, undertaken and carried through ?

And how high and vast is the task which she must accomplish through agents so imperfect ! Her own children need to be warned as well as encouraged, to be threatened as well as to be comforted. Good must be cherished, and scandals cast out. The indifferent must be roused, the doubting guided, the erring corrected, the ignorant instructed, the weak protected. The work, even within her own borders, is for angels rather than men ; and there is the whole world that lieth in the Wicked One around her to be converted. Idolatry still maintains its power over millions, many of them in the peoples nominally Christian. Does not the Church need all visible unity and compactness of organization possible to be attained, and all weight of authority both from the past and from the present, and all might and dominion both from without and from within ? While so many of her own members are wavering, and the multitudes are everywhere perishing with-

out knowledge, must not the Church's note be certain and her call peremptory: "For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself for the battle?" And when was it ever more certain that good and evil are not in friendly debate, but are locked together in deadly struggle, and that this is a world in which a Church can be of little value that cannot summon her children to gird themselves for the fray, and cannot utter continuously in their ears the imperious call of duty, and require for its demands unqualified loyalty and unrestricted subordination?

CHAPTER II

THE IDEAL OF HILDEBRAND

The Church leader's first want. An impressive organization. A divinely crowned ruler. Chief representative. Two sons of carpenters.

As soon as men take an active part in shaping the policy or guiding the enterprise of any section of the Church, their labour is always for corporate action, and their chief hindrance the insubordination of the individual. The Church leader is soon taught that the individual member is none too loyal, and that even the general sense of the community is none too wise. Not without reason, therefore, he comes to regard himself as the origin of all right direction and the chief bulwark against anarchy. When he finds the resources of his eminence strained by the task of imposing even a measure of order, he naturally exalts the claims of the organization and the authority of the official. Naturally also the last source from which he would willingly derive their sanction is the personal freedom and personal responsibility of the members, which seem to him the source of trouble. He rather trusts to find it in the organization itself, either in its history or in a recognized external Divine sanction. In any case, it is not for discussion but for domination. And without some such authority, vaguely accepted of

the people, probably the policy and the enterprise of no section of the Church, as now constituted, could be maintained. Therefore each seeks to marshal its resources of men and means, being convinced that to bring men to God, it must first bring them to itself, and that where this is accomplished, the means are approved by the result.

Circumstances have modified the ideal of Hildebrand, but there are also circumstances which keep it alive. A kingdom in which perfect order and perfect unity had been attained through perfect freedom, is a goal so distant and visionary that it repels the active minds who desire to see the success for which they labour. But the aim of Hildebrand is far enough away to be great, yet near enough to be within reach ; and the method of seeking it has a virility and practicability fitted to arouse enthusiasm. Was there ever greater need than in this turbulent, material age, of a spiritual, Divinely guided ruler to correct secular wisdom and restrain secular folly, and to direct worldly institutions by more closely interweaving them with spiritual ? If by the Church's infallible guidance the world's activities were directed, and the final appeal in all matters were to a Church so great that none would be so daring as to question her authority, none so highly placed as to deny her homage, none so mighty as to deprive her of a possession, none so self-centred as to deny her a privilege, none so self-absorbed as to consider any profit of his own without first considering hers, what evils might not be restrained,

what reformation might not be wrought in the earth, with peace imposed upon warring nations, what party strife banished from public life, what dishonesty and uncleanness driven out of private? Then the individual, instead of being himself the fountain of authority, would find an authority with a higher sanction to curb his passions, suppress his selfishness, and buttress his will by a stronger control.

Hildebrand himself, the chief representative of this ideal of being "clothed with power from on high" may not have been perfect; and in consequence the result of his labours may have wanted something in permanence. Yet he showed what might be done. He also was the son of a carpenter, rising from the lowliest beginnings to be the type and unrivalled chief of all who, by might and by power, have sought to subdue the kingdoms of this world into the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. "He made him lord of his house and ruler of all his substance: to bind his princes at his pleasure, and teach his senators wisdom." Then the resources of the Church were husbanded for her own requirements, no servant of hers was allowed to consider any interest but her own, no opinion or method opposed in rivalry what she taught and ordered, and kings were made, in hard practical subjection, to know that they were only "God's silly vassals."

Yet the task, with all his talent for it, was not always accomplished with Christlike purity of motive and method, and the result left much to be desired.

The rule of the Church became not less secular than the rule of the world; evil was often done that good might come; and the evil wrought its natural result and the good was further away than before. Then the princes resented being bound at a pleasure so arbitrary, and the senators revolted against a wisdom which so imperfectly guided the person who imposed it. The end was strife, not peace, a dangerous approach to anarchy, not order.

But, may it not be argued that this failure arose from the errors and defects of the person who exercised the authority, and casts no doubt upon the utility of such power when well exercised, or the need of some more restricted measure of it for the work of the Church in all its branches? Is not what is wanted to have some one more like that other Son of a carpenter, one who would never fall under the power of the world he sought to govern for its good, in short be swayed by no personal ambition, follow no crooked policy, trust no unworthy agents, use nothing but the purest means, have no personal end to serve, but wholly serve men's highest good?

Still the hope lingers in all parts of the Church that this authority can be exercised in some more Christlike fashion to some more Christlike end, and that the ruler who can be sure that he stands in Christ's stead, cannot speak with too exalted authority and cannot be the master of too extensive resources. The Church is regarded as a visible organization of weight in the world, with a goal that may be attained and results that may be reckoned.

For an end so high and so practical she is expected to insist, not on her children's freedom and insight, but on the blessings that await subjection to an authority so highly descended and promising such an abundant sanction of permanent and increasing security.

CHAPTER III

A FULLER SUBMISSION

Error in asking too little. An aim too distant and a method too slow. Worldly materials. Faith to wait. Measure not by bulk. The things unseen. Facing Eternity.

THE error of Hildebrand is usually assumed to be that he asked too much. But on the contrary, it was in being content with too little. The Master's little finger is thicker than His servant's loins, for mere absence of resistance in no way suffices Him. He will have an undivided and absolute allegiance. The sacrifice of some part of our gains, the surrender of some external part of our pleasures, the dedication of some part of our lives by rules of measure and abstinence, the subjection of some of our opinions and the conformity of some of our actions afford no fulfilment of His demands. All life, its joys and its possessions, its powers and its motives, its aims and its enterprises, must be held at His disposal.

The method of Hildebrand is thus, from first to last, at variance with the method of the Master. It is not made alien merely by its defects of ambition and temper and crooked policy. It is entirely incapable of establishing His rule. It never could bring any one beyond a sense of the painful conflict

between his own will and God's will, whereas the method of Christ can have no beginning till this opposition has been overcome. Until the heights have been reached from which man can see that his own will is only blessed in so far as it is God's, our Lord finds no profit in obedience. And the authority that would rule in His name, may not make any lower beginning with profit. Thy will be done on earth, it must ever say, not after the imperfect outward fashion which suffices earthly rule, but, as in heaven, after the inward fashion of willing, glad obedience that makes heaven.

For the very reason that her task is so great, the Church may not make any lower beginning than Christ made, or hope to succeed by any less absolute submission than He required. Belief in other methods always arises from a superficial and hasty forgetfulness of the deep change to be effected if the Kingdom of God is to come. To the children of Hildebrand in all Churches it seems too distant and its method too slow. The glorious liberty of the children of God, were it once complete, they would gladly accept, but they find a great stumbling block in the very imperfect liberty of the children of men. The Church may well desire to see her children free, but what danger will she run if they mistake license for the freedom wherewith Christ has set His people free; and what superhuman patience is needed to continue, in spite of their follies, to exhort them not to be entangled again in the yoke of bondage! It is far easier to suppose that the

purpose of the Gospel is merely to lead men by a higher way to a more binding legalism, that they may return to the old highway of regulated wellbeing with renewed confidence.

But, while the Church may labour to bring men to God, she may be too little anxious about the kind of God they shall find and the kind of leading by which they are brought. To the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ men can only be brought in Christ's way. It is not enough to say, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name?" Christ is the way to the Father only as He is the way to a free and loving obedience worthy of His children. This He is, not as an imperious ruler, breaking what He cannot bend, but as the revelation of all truth to the minds that see Him and of all power to the hearts that love Him. Wherefore, the Church that speaks in His name must have the same attitude of Christlike meekness and patience towards the defective obedience of this evil world.

But to build in this way only with the gold and silver and precious stones of insight and love and freedom is tedious and slow. Wood, hay and stubble are abundant. By using them, progress, visible to the blindest, can be made, when otherwise it would be hidden from the keenest eye. The almost invisible meeting of the two or three may speedily be made into the impressive assembly of multitudes. When pride of intellect is built with humble seeking after truth, pride of place with lowly service, pride of office with the grace of humility, empty abstraction

with the experience of the saints, fear of man with love of God, and when nothing is required except to build according to regulation, the Church may rise like Babel on the plains of Shinar. To question a result so glorious may be esteemed an impiety ; faith itself be invoked as its watchful guardian ; men be called upon to exercise all vigilance and exhaust all resources for its preservation : but the end is always confusion of tongues.

The Faith has been invoked for the defence of the worldliest materials, down to persecution itself. But true faith sees that no force, either of overbearing action or overbearing influence, nothing that replaces individual wisdom, personal decision, inward strength, can have an abiding place in the Kingdom of God. Christ has His own ecclesiastics, His own Church-builders. But their ambition cannot be satisfied by numbers ; and their test is not visibility. Largeness, wealth, or even acknowledged influence may only prove skill in appealing to the senses, in the possession of which all rejoice ; while smallness, though it may have no better reason than opinionativeness, uncharitableness, or autocratic temper, might be the outcome of exceptional loyalty to the spiritual vision which is so imperfectly developed in the best. The Church most faithful to this appeal might have at once the narrowest present limitations and the promise of the widest and most permanent dominion. God will not merely have His Church built on the right foundation, but will have it built of the costliest material. He will try everything so

as by fire. It may be fire of persecution or fire of doubt. Some crisis it will be, searching as a conflagration, leaving man nothing but such few precious stones as he had actually gathered and some residue of fertilizing, if melancholy ashes of all his wood, hay, and stubble. It is a testing which to man seems ruin, but God is the great Master-builder, of patience inexhaustible, Who tests, and rejects, and suffers nothing but the best. Even the right foundation will not consecrate in His eyes base material. On the contrary, nowhere is it less in place. On this foundation, to build in haste is only to suffer loss.

Even in the world, while the things seen are temporal, there are unseen things which are eternal. A ragged, half-starved Galileo, silenced by prison walls, may seem the embodiment of weakness. But he will yet shake the world with the thought that is in him. He will teach the shepherd following his flock on the hill and the miner digging like a mole in his burrow, setting their imaginations in flight through myriad worlds. Millions of opponents and prison walls against him are unavailing. Against truth, though only in one small brain, they cannot prevail. For truth, even time brings victory, and eternity waits beyond. Still more have the Church's true builders to meet the test, not of the first century, nor of the fourth, but, turned in the opposite direction, to face eternity. That is the test which proves how small a thing is bulk, and how great is quality. What else will abide but truth and love,

and what dominion can increase except the Kingdom of the free? Even for vastness of rule, what else has promise except what has the power in itself eternally to increase?

CHAPTER IV

THE CHURCH'S ECCLESIASTIC

For what the Church requires authority. The Papacy in commission. The type evolved by elevation. The burden of reality. The unanimous resolution. Precedent. The circuitous road. The first last. The true authority.

IF eternity is the test of the Church's work, no urgency can justify a fruitless haste. Where this is understood, the right question can never be the kind of authority required by the Church for her present method. The question to be asked is, What authority would she require, if she followed exclusively Christ's method? The two methods have never been in perfect agreement, and too frequently they have been entirely opposed. A mixture of worldly and spiritual policy is to be found in all religious societies. It addresses itself partly to man's deepest needs and partly to his hastiest fears and his shallowest appreciations. Every religious society is a mixture more or less pure of the Divine and the human, of the true and the customary, of the ideal and the expedient, so that nothing stands quite unshaken in this age of inquiry. Yet the real security, not perhaps of any particular association, but of the true Church, does not suffer when an age of inquiry robs her of the lower authority, and forces her to cast herself more entirely upon the higher.

The visible, worldly authority of the Church has never so effectively forwarded Christ's work in the world or been exercised so uniformly in Christ's spirit, that we should be tempted to regard it as more than at best a necessary temporal expedient. The struggle for office is an unholy rivalry, and its unloveliness has not been least repellent when the prize in view was lordship over God's heritage. Too often it has been of selfishness and nepotism, position being sought for the profit and dignity of it, and granted on personal considerations, sometimes of gain and always of favour. The qualities which prevail in this struggle are precisely those which our Lord did not consider in choosing His Apostles, and they are still those which least efficaciously offer the invitation of the Meek and Lowly to the weary and heavy laden. Whether pope or president, whether of high prelatical recognition or voluntary presbyterial elevation, the robe of office has not always clothed Zion's priests with humility. The type evolved by elevation in the Church is too seldom of the kind which charms us into saying, Be ye followers of this as it is of Christ Jesus ; and in every Church there are ecclesiastical functions which have sent some devout soul home to his humble sphere, not ungrateful for being saved from the temptation of higher.

At times the Church has been so largely built of worldly material that Churchmen were only secular princes in ecclesiastical array. Her authority was but the mailed political arm thinly covered by the

linen garment of the sanctuary. In these later times this compulsion of secular power has failed the Church, and the change in her bearing already shows the wisdom of the deprivation. Yet she has not succeeded in replacing it altogether by spiritual influence. The deepest trust of those met in the name of Christ is very far still from being exclusively in the loyalty of the hearts He has changed, in the hearts freed from all other influences to be wholly His. Even good people speak as if, without some stronger inducement to faith and practice than religion itself, Christianity must decay, especially as if some alliance with the secular power were essential to its existence.

But the support of the secular power might be definitely and consciously abandoned as inconsistent with the highest religious purpose and the purest religious method, yet the false trust not be weakened. The last thing in man upon which hope is rested, might still be his faith and his consecration and his love. Thus when men speak rhetorically of trusting the liberality of the Christian people, they often know in their hearts that they only mean the ostentation of worldly people ; and when they speak of the free influence of religious opinion, they often know they have not rejected the support of people neither wise nor charitable. Just because it believes itself to rest on persuasion not on force, pride of office may only be cloaked by becoming more insinuating and more scheming. Habit, compromise, half measures of all kinds, undue regard to the

opinion of the influential or to the overbearing conviction of the multitude, claims of privilege and sanctions of age, may still be followed, and be as effective in opposing either intellectual or moral enterprise and in deprecating originality either of thought or action.

Something may be gained by putting the Papacy, as it were, in commission. No single man is then exposed to the temptations of the highest place and unrestricted power. The authority is more directly derived from the community, and its holders are ever liable to be called to account for the way in which it is exercised. But the ecclesiastical mind is the same under all outward forms, and the final outcome depends not on the forms, but on the men who use them. Few devices can do more to effect a working compound of principles and probable results, of Divine calls and human hesitations, than the resolution, especially the unanimous resolution, which compounds everybody's opinion and commits nobody to anything. The inventor of it has done more to salve tender consciences than the inventor of penance.

In every calling the springs of life are apt, after a time, to break down under the burden of reality. Then the weight rests as it were, upon the axle of professionalism ; and then the greater the weakness, the more unquestioned is the confidence of strength. Only very few men in any calling escape routine. The number in any walk of life who continue to the end, with widening vision and increasing purpose, is few. Moreover, those few are little esteemed,

what is true having few admirers compared with what is generally accepted as true, and what ought to be done compared with what is expected to be done. And when the burden of reality involves both the eternal verities and the hourly perplexities of belief and duty, it is only in the nature of things that the springs of faith and enterprise should break down more completely and the axle of professionalism seem the most solid support of the burden of reality. Then settled formula comfortably replaces unsteady inquiry. Great is its use in all departments of life, but greatest by far in religion. When the form of sound words has become more sacred than their meaning, the bitter necessity of asking if they are true is obviated, and the soul of man can be at rest.

The other succour is precedent. Great as is its power in other departments of life, it is as nothing compared with its might in religion. Here a reverence is paid to our fathers which they never enjoy, say, in any matter of gain or pleasure. For complete deliverance, not only must rites and customs be observed with a care not always called for by their secular origin, but a peculiar type of conscience is evolved, to which the tithing of mint and anise and cummin are of more consequence than the weightier matters of the law.

A conscience alive to truth and falsehood, right and wrong, being replaced by a narrow, pragmatistical punctiliousness guided by arbitrary and occasionally by sophistical rules, no truth needs to be considered till it has arrived at the stage of being formulated,

and no duty till it is well supported by precedent. As the deeper penetration of love and the all-embracing comprehension of willingness to serve are thought too vague for guidance and too weak for fellowship, the visible leader, pope or president, or, failing them, council or committee, brings out pole and measuring rod, and lays down the way over crevasse or boulder, and ropes all the travellers together in one bond of safety, or at worst of common destruction. In our day, being unsupported, either by his own unquestioned authority or by any other irresistible outside power, he must necessarily work more circuitously, but the aim is still to find the beauty of holiness through regulation of worship and to make the Church effective through inclusiveness of organization; and the way of seeking it is still a professional spirit of compromise. Instead of seeking life first and waiting till it create its own regulation, the hope is that regulations will do as well as life. That some larger idea should be working out in the universe than in any actual organization, even one's own, is a hypothesis beyond the accepted working theory.

But God is the great reality. His ways are all ordered aright, yet in Him there is no routine. He hastes not, but also He is not weary. Nothing stereotypes itself in His world into formula, for the variety is as evident as the order. Nothing is governed merely by precedent, for nothing ever happens exactly as it has happened before. Whatsoever becomes rigid may long endure, but it falls

out of the course of His purpose, and is no longer of the living Church which abides in power because she is ever sensitive to all truth and alive to all the duties of love and is ever enlarging her freedom by enlarging her sense of responsibility. Wherefore, much the ecclesiastic thinks he has built most securely God will cast down, and much he esteems lightly is eternal.

CHAPTER V

THE ORGANIZED SOCIETY

The field is the world. The chaff and the wheat. The authority to serve. Spirit and form. The functions of rule, combination and discipline. Simplification of organization.

THE field of the Church is the world. Her task is to reclaim it from barrenness and to bring forth all the wealth hidden in its soil. With so great a task before her and so little of it overtaken, it is not strange that she should be impatient of delay. The work is so vast and so promising that she would haste to finish it. Then she sows good grain or bad, or even a mixture of tares and wheat, forgetting that no activity has any promise in it except the work of putting good seed into well-prepared soil. She thinks it too slow a task to deal with the heart of man. The call of love seems to meet with only a lingering response and the way of freedom to be impossible or of doubtful wisdom. In her haste she has not always shunned outward violence, and still she is not able to forego methods of compulsion hostile to the growth of freedom. Social ostracism, public opinion or rather public prejudice—any external influence which may ensure a measure of conformity and respectability—are too readily employed, and any obedience, not actually under the hand of the constable, is too readily

accepted. Any form of submission, not to what she should stand for of truth and righteousness and freedom, but merely to herself, to her organization and to her regulations, has seemed to her good enough seed with which to sow the world ; and the souls of her leaders have rejoiced at the thought of one vast uniform field of this harvest waving round the circuit of the globe.

But, just because the field is the world, the Church must learn to say, " What is the chaff to the wheat ? " The only good seed is the souls that know and love the truth, the souls in whom no climate changes obedience, because under every meridian they feel equally their freedom and responsibility. With this seed alone may the world be sown, to produce all the rich variety of God's harvest. Man may be hasty, but God is patient. Man would sow with regulations, God will only sow with an ordered freedom. The imperfection of His world, the great wastes still sown with weeds, speak not of His indifference, but of His unwavering patience. Mere submission, even to Himself, does not satisfy Him. He desires a goodness free from all compulsion that is not of its own insight. The ultimate purpose of His world is to be a field of the free, a kingdom of souls, emancipated from all other constraint, to be entirely under the dominion of love. This is His end ; and it abides as what time has to contribute to eternity. The rest is only the means, changing with changing needs, at best the preparing of the soil, at worst the beating of it harder.

The visible Church is therefore not to be regarded as an end in itself, but only as a means for the final Kingdom of God. By its fitness to secure this end, it must be tested. Such fitness can be nothing else than its approach to the likeness of the Kingdom it would serve. Success in cultivating any part of the large field of the world will depend on how much of the true grain of love and service has been sown, and how little of the chaff of regulation and compulsion. With right sowing she will reap true authority in the loyal heartfelt submission of her own children, who have learned to agree with her teaching and who acknowledge a debt of gratitude to her influence. Then she may seat herself with confidence on the throne of the vicar of Christ. Just as God removes one external support of the Church's faith after another till in the end she can teach only what she is prepared to live, so He withdraws from her one external support to her dominion after another till in the end she can only rule as she is willing to serve. Yet her true testimony will grow with the experimental character of her conviction and the diminution of her assertions ; and her true dominion will increase as her service expands and her pretensions diminish. Then she will have no need to inquire what is the source of her authority, for her life will be a continual demonstration that it is derived from the Kingdom for which she labours. Time and eternity alike will demonstrate its reality, for, as what is opened or shut in truth can never be again shut or opened,

so what she binds in love upon earth is bound in heaven, and what she looses on earth is loosed in heaven.

For this task the spirit must always be of more consequence than the form. All types of organization may be inspired with the right spirit, but no type can ensure immunity from the spirit of domination. Hence no organization is final, none eternal. The very expectation of progress, the very fulness of the ideal of the Kingdom forbids us to believe at any time that we have attained what God can never amend and will never replace. Yet the organization is not indifferent because it is of less consequence than the spirit. It is nothing without the spirit ; as the body is nothing without the living soul. Yet as the body is the only instrument of the soul, so is the organization of the spirit. No practical ordinance in any section of the Church has worth which is not informed with the spirit of Christ. Yet it is not a matter of indifference whether or not the ordinance be fitted to give due expression to this spirit. As some forms are more agreeable to the spirit of an ordered freedom, some more hostile, it should ever be a constant endeavour in all sections of the Church to organize themselves in the way which most entirely bases co-operation on fellowship and unity on love, and which, by most effectively teaching the members that nothing prospers save in the general health, best secures the effectiveness of all regulations by the sense of individual responsibility. The best organization is that which most

settles order on freedom, and teaches freedom to esteem its duties before its rights. This organization must be sought and must be cherished, for, though the ideal world might do without any outward order, our distance from the ideal makes it imperative that we should study the best means of reaching out towards it.

Every organized body of Christians must exercise the three functions—Rule, Combination, and Discipline.

Every rule is manifestly imperfect which at once fails to direct the Church to the highest ends, and yet concentrates power so as to destroy her efficacy as a school of Divine freedom. The worst is that which assumes, as its first presupposition, the inability of her members ever to arrive at the glorious liberty of the children of God. The best is as manifestly that which can make itself most entirely accepted in the spirit of loyalty and freedom, and most guides those who desire only the guidance of truth and righteousness. No organization can secure this result, but the organization which gives most scope to the humblest service and which most directly derives its power from the humble and the faithful, will be most in the way of it.

Again, there can be no society without combination, without cohesion. It cannot embrace too much individuality, but it may easily be made futile by individual assertion. Continual intrusion of personal or even of congregational interest must sap the influence of the larger society and prevent its

efficacy as a means for promoting the still larger Kingdom of God. The form of organization must be worst which compacts most, and unites least. Mere combination of conflicting interests is no unity. The true success is to be measured, not by any coagulation or suppression of differences, but by the extent of the appeal to the sense of responsibility. That Church has the most effective combination which is surest of the public-spirited loyalty of her members, because it has best taught that rights are based on duties and that there is no way of safeguarding our own liberties like a careful regard for the liberties of others.

Finally, there can be no form of spiritual society without the exercise of some form of discipline. It is a spiritual society precisely because it is not made up of all men but is selected upon a principle. As the efficacy of the Church must depend upon its purity, nothing can be of greater importance for her than having her fan in her hand. The chaff never does anything for the wheat except to cause doubt of its vitality. Hence in times of trial when God Himself has winnowed the Church and left it but a very little remnant, instead of discouragement at a result so small, there has ever been the largest hope and expectation.

Yet the Church cannot, by the exercise of any rule and mere crude elimination, thoroughly purge her floor. She may thereby exclude the weak in faith, but she will never exclude the strong in respectability. She must proceed in Christ's own way and have her fan

in her hand as He had. To have this she only needs to be doing His work in His spirit. That society best exercises discipline which directly rejects none unless the life is a flagrant denial of the profession, but which, by its devotion to the things of the Kingdom of God, attracts only those who are seeking them, and repels those who have sought its fellowship for meaner ends ; and that society which attempts by arbitrary selection to accomplish a task so difficult and delicate, exercises it worst.

As the Church of Christ advances in the sense that freedom is the glad acceptance of the Divine order, and as her harmony is more securely established in the general recognition of responsibility as the counterpart of freedom, and as her purity alone can rightly attract and repel, the forms of organization may become simpler and they will certainly become more secondary. We may even return along the road by which we have come, and end with every devout soul as the vicar of Christ after the highest order. As the Church learns to think more of men and less of means, her insight may deepen, till she can with confidence lay aside other safeguards, because she has discovered the true leader, who is first because he is the greatest servant of all, and because all its members are first by their willingness to be last. But this possible goal does not in the meantime deliver us from the responsibility of loyally serving the organization which we believe to be most in the line of progress, and which most safeguards freedom, teaches duty and works for purity. This

may never be taken over by an earthly bishop of bishops, but it will be taken over by the Shepherd and Bishop of all souls, the great Head of the Church, the establishment of whose reign should be the aim of all her organizations. To fulfil this end, the motto of all sections of her should be, "Would that the Lord's people were all prophets."

CHAPTER VI

THE OFFICE OF A BISHOP

Noli episcopari. Desiring a good work. The last who are first.

THE contrast between the actual and the ideal has ever grieved and dismayed enlightened souls ; and the way of escaping, by refusing to participate in the struggle, has attracted many. Nowhere more than in the Church, has the man who has seen the larger aim and learned to love the more patient method, been readier to follow a course which is commended not by Christ but by Plato. “ Now he who has become a member of this little band, and has tasted how sweet and blessed its treasure is, and has watched the madness of the many, with the full assurance that there is scarcely a person who takes a single judicious step in life, and that there is no ally with whom he may safely march to the succour of the just ; nay, that, should he attempt it, he will be like a man that has fallen among wild beasts, unwilling to join in their iniquities and unable to resist the fury of all, and therefore destined to perish before he can be of any use to his country or to his friends, and to do no good to himself or to any one else : having, I say, weighed all this, such a man keeps quiet and confines himself to his own concerns, like one who takes shelter behind a wall on a stormy day, when the wind is driving before it a hurricane of dust and rain ; and when from his

retreat he sees the infection of lawlessness spreading over the rest of mankind, he is well content if he can in any way live his life here untainted in his own person by unrighteousness and unholy deeds, and, when the time for his release arrives, take his departure amid bright hopes with cheerfulness and serenity.”¹ Nowhere more than in the Church is the struggle for office an unholy rivalry; and of the Christian societies it is also true that that “in which the destined rulers are least eager to rule, will inevitably be governed in the best and least factious manner.” The Church which could be delivered from the rulers who have attained their eminence through success in the rivalry for place and power, and who regard the proof of their authority to be their right to give orders to their fellow creatures, would be blessed. The Church for which Christ emptied Himself and took upon Himself the form of a servant, not least of human institutions, has been harassed by narrow-minded men who looked upon their own authority and the Church’s prosperity as identical, and whose sole aim was to reduce men to a barren and pragmatistical orthodoxy to be nourished by a “neat and comfortable devotion,” the whole to be directed by a rigid and mechanical conscientiousness.

The Church, nevertheless, has something higher to seek than the ruler who is least eager to rule. Experience, in spite of the evils of rivalry, has not taught that the races whose rulers are most averse from

¹ *Republic* : Davies and Vaughan’s translation.

office are best governed ; and Scripture agrees with experience, not with Plato. The compulsion Plato longed for to make the unwilling serve, Christ has brought. Though the history of the Church has glorified the saying, " *Noli episcopari*," the Scripture has said that to desire the office of a bishop is to desire a good work. And, if Christ has accomplished anything in the world at all, He has taught men to find a good work the loftiest and most urgent ambition. Happy is the country or the institution whose rulers have been delivered from the love of power for its own sake, for the mere reward and glory, the mere pay and trappings, but who still desire it for the good it may accomplish and for the call and opportunity it presents of larger usefulness. Wretched is the country or institution when its members struggle to exercise lordship over each other. But wretched also is the country or institution whose members shrink from responsibility, and from the rubs of active life, and from the large blame and little praise which is the more likely to be the reward the higher the service.

The right condition is, " And whosoever would be first among you shall be servant of all." As the only good work is service, the only power worth striving after is power to serve. To be a bishop, an overseer, a ruler, rightly understood, is to be first in humility, in readiness to help, in labour, in danger, and, if need be, in indignity. To shrink from positions of responsibility, even of greatness, is not a virtue. True virtue is still valour, with boldness of

doing accompanying boldness of thinking. Even if "there be no ally with whom to march safely to the succour of the just ; nay, that should he attempt it, he will be like a man that has fallen among wild beasts," yet will the call to go alone be the greater. Thus the greatest servant of the human race went forth to its succour. And all who would follow Him must be ready, in meekness and lowliness, to be great or to be small as God shall appoint his life for him. Only in this unpromising service can the soul discover the secret of its peace and attain the assurance of its blessed possession. We cease from inward strife by ever having as the first words on our lips, "Here am I, send me, to lead or follow as Thou requirest."

How much the Church of Christ owes to those servants of all, who have had meekness to be first, and how many of them, in all branches of the Church, have redeemed her from secular rivalry and ambition, will never be known till the great day declare it. But whether their prominence was great or small, in the public eye, or in obscurest places, they have worthily sat in the seat of the Apostle who, with doubting yet courageous heart, stepped forward on the Day of Pentecost to be the Church's representative to utter her thought, and, if need be, to bear her reproach. By rising triumphant over the wish to domineer, they were able to rule Christ's people as a "royal nation," their last word ever being, "And I would ye did reign, that we also might reign with you."

CHAPTER VII

THE EXTENT OF RESPONSIBILITY

The need of limitation. Shortness not narrowness of view. Not a matter of size. The special claim of the nearest. Limits greater than all Churches. Daily not unceasingly. The waste of anxiety. Astuteness. Shorter views to take longer. The weighty import of eternity.

THE true spiritual leader, whether in a great sphere or a small, is the person who recognizes most meekly the obligations of service and the call of opportunity. Yet even in this service of the highest cause there is need of limitation. Human powers are restricted. To dissipate our energies over too wide a field is to waste them. Concentration is a necessity of all effectiveness. Even to duty some limit must be set, for man is not omniscient to be aware of all claims, nor omnipotent to fulfil them. How then, without being a restriction of our true obligation or of our legitimate interest, may the demands upon our care be brought within the limits of our finite resources?

The Apostle defines at once the largeness and the limitation of his task when he speaks of "that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the Churches." At first sight it might appear that he sets no limit, but it is a very great limitation to restrict care to what the day brings. In this he followed the Master's warnings against allowing the

necessary anxiety for to-day to be changed into the useless anxiety for to-morrow. But, with this limitation in duration he recognizes none in extent. His care is for all the Churches.

Most Church leaders seem to believe that the boundaries of responsibility have been otherwise appointed, so that, instead of coming upon them daily, they should look further ahead, but, to compensate, instead of embracing all the Churches, one should suffice. And the limitation necessary for the concentration which finite minds require, is usually set in this way. According to the common view, narrowness rather than shortness of vision most brings ease and comfort. Nor is this wholly mistaken. There are few more effective ways of lightening our load of care than to narrow our interest. Wide sympathy is exhausting in itself, and is apt to flow out in many directions in a way that taxes both hand and heart to follow. Hence it comes to pass that narrowness, like peace, yea, as a very manifest and consoling kind of peace, is occasionally regarded as an evidence of great religious depth and earnestness. For this there is always a measure of justification. Comprehensiveness may not be the large charity which soars over great differences. It may only be the feeble indifference which passes beneath them, which is not caring for all, but attaching no particular interest to any. Better than this is earnest zeal for any smallest corner of the vineyard.

Only when the body which absorbs it all is very

small, is the restriction usually called narrow. If the body to which we give our exclusive sympathy is large, we call ourselves catholic. Only if it is small, are we sectarian. Yet, if care should be all-comprehensive, the larger or smaller dimensions of the denomination which enjoys the exclusive benefit of our zeal, in no way alters the rightness or wrongness of our attitude. To assume, often without inquiry and always without sympathetic inquiry, on grounds of social even more than of religious prejudice, that the section which has the distinguished honour of our adherence is the only true Church of Christ, is not rendered more Christlike because we can look down from the height of numbers, culture, or social prestige. This might only be the least Christlike of all forms of limitation. Spirit, not size, determines Sectarianism.

Limitation there must be in all human endeavour, but in the Christian service there is only one valid boundary. It is that which is drawn by present duty and opportunity and urgency. We are to serve the whole common good by doing steadfastly the particular duty of the moment. This may mean that the first and chief claim will spring from the particular society to which we belong. Yet, even it, we serve best when our outlook is widest. The most catholic spirit finds its chief duties in that which lies nearest, as the most public-spirited man finds the first claim upon his diligence in the bosom of his family: but as no man can be, in the noblest sense, the head of his own family, without a just

feeling of the sacredness of all families, a feeling not altogether lost for him in the most sordid manifestation of it upon earth, so no man can ever serve the highest interests of the Church of his special devotion without a similar sacred feeling for all associations that maintain fellowship in the faith of Christ, however far apart he may feel them to be from his own type of faith and worship. If he fail in this, the Church has become for him, no army of the Kingdom of God with the purposes of eternity to fulfil, but only another society competing for a little moment in the paltry struggle for temporal pre-eminence.

The boundaries of our care should not be less than all the Churches, but greater. The true follower of Christ must be prepared to find much of his Master's teaching, much of his Master's work, and something of his Master's fellowship in a far wider circle than all the Churches that bear the Christian name. The secret of all catholicity of heart is in looking beyond all Churches to the Kingdom of God, and in recognizing that even all the Churches do not comprehend it. They do not embrace all its subjects, nor do they circumscribe all its interests.

As all the Churches are only, as it were, the standing army of the Kingdom, our relations to the Church should be threefold.

First, with our own section of this army we may have, and ought to have, quite peculiar relations of memories and fellowships and associations. Through it we best serve the common weal, and, without

bigotry, we may believe that through no other agency could we serve it as effectively.

Second, we must never forget that our regiment cannot fulfil its own task, if it do not forward the success of the whole army. We should not desire for it the easiest places, nor the most lauded success, but we should desire it to share the hard and difficult and slow and discouraging tasks. Only in times of piping peace are the pampered household troops more admired than the war-worn veterans. So the high esteem for the dignitary and the popular preacher perhaps shows that no denomination is very deeply committed to the good fight of faith.

Finally, there is no true patriotism as long as the army is more than the State. As long as we set the visible Church first, and what it should protect and expand after it, we are not loyal to the Kingdom of God. We serve our own sect only to serve the Church, and we serve even the whole Church only to serve the Kingdom of God.

Yet we need to limit our care, if it is not to be dissipated in multitudinous fruitless activities. Its true restriction is in duration. The secret of the power to care so widely is to discern that the only time it could be of any avail is to-day, and that the only practical demand upon it is the duty immediately before us. On this condition alone can man's power of caring suffice to meet the demands of the largest sympathy. If all that is spent in worry were spent on toil, if all pain of anticipation were pains in concentration, if all dismay at ills

that never came and all shrinking from blows that never fall were spent in the energy of present diligence, the claims of the day, though sufficient, would never be overwhelming. The error is not in the anxiety, but in the waste of a commodity so precious. To be anxious for the morrow is to take our care from where it is urgently needed, to bestow it where it is unavailing. And every time we thus misapply our diligence, the need for peering anxiously into the future seems to increase. Moreover, to hesitate and shrink from the duty in hand, because of possible contingencies, is a bad preparation for any contingency the future may have in store, of what nature soever it may be. If truth always guides the feet and love always moves the hands, the tasks of each day will joyfully and effectively occupy our whole thought and resolute endeavour. And this will be the best preparation for anything the future may have in store, whereas profitless diversion from present labours makes us incapable of meeting its calamities or using its opportunities.

Yet most institutions, and not least the Churches, esteem as leaders those who are regarded as safe men. This means men who do not daringly face the lessons and the opportunities of the day, but devote themselves to providing against ills which often their dread only brings nearer, and sometimes to circumventing the uncircumventible plan of the All-wise. Astuteness is their chief guide, which, like old age sight, peers at things far off, while the next step is taken with hesitation. Dangers the simple

never think of, they see like an impending cliff in the mouth of the narrow defile into which the present crisis is leading the Church. Then the straight way is shunned for some devious route they imagine more secure. This may have its own success. The event often disappoints the fears; the devices for dispelling the danger often bring it; one evil may be shunned only to run into the arms of another: but that even the worst, least Christian forms of astuteness, forms uniting intrigue and violence, have at times succeeded in the immediate aim, is written large on the face of history. Wherefore, leaders of worldly policy will always be esteemed in the Church as well as in the State, and, if the first concern is immediate escape from trouble, this is right.

But a leader in a Kingdom of God needs a longer vision than the wisest and acutest human prevision. If he takes shorter views, it is that ultimately he may take longer. He has no thought that man can live profitably, from one forgetful moment to another, from one undreading moment to another. He concentrates on the present, not in any contempt for the dangers of the future, but in the assurance that the duty of the present prepares the only reception for the future which man is in a position to undertake. Every moment of time, he feels, needs a larger guidance than any anticipation of its dangers can afford. This can only be provided by seeing in the duty of the day an eternal as well as a present guidance. As every stone laid true has in it the plan of the whole cathedral, every moment lived aright

has in it the large wisdom of eternity. To provide therefore against all futures, prognosticated and undreamed of alike, the business of every man who is called upon to bear any responsibility, is, with the widest sympathy and diligence, to discover and to do the task of this day.

The true bishop, the true overseer and leader, the first in the Kingdom of God, the recipient of the highest Divine honour, whatever be the poverty of his human honour, is he who takes his tasks as they come and when they come. He does not go in search of them and he does not extend them beyond their present urgency: yet he transacts each day's business with the weighty import of eternity, seeking, under the guidance of opportunity and duty, to perform his part, not in a small plan of human prevision, but in the complete plan of the Omniscient. To inspire the Church with the lofty faith which holds truth above subtlety, and uprightness above carefulness, and to show her the scorn the eternal working of God pours upon man's ephemeral counter-working, is to be a true overseer in the Church, even though his outward position be of the lowliest.

When the Church attains to resolute, insistent devotion to the duty of the present, when she reaches the clear conviction that for fleeting, erring mortals there can be no other safe preparation for the future, when she recognizes that light is only sown for the righteous and gladness for the upright in heart, her problems both of practice and of belief will be approaching their solution.

CHAPTER VIII

THE LORD'S SERVANT

One sphere as large as another. Knowledge of life. Isolation. Destruction. Man at his value to himself and to his Maker. The Lord's servant shall not strive. Right endurance of evil and endeavour after good.

ONE is called to lead, another to follow ; one fills a prominent position, another an obscure. Men are distinguished by the whole range of honour and opportunity and responsibility. But in another sense, a deeper sense, no man's sphere is narrower than another's, no man's obligation lighter. Every man is the Lord's servant, and his sphere is nothing less than the Kingdom of God, and his obligation nothing less than obedience to every call to serve it. Though his opportunities may be small and his ability to use them yet smaller, he has the same relation to them, the same responsibility for them, as the greatest and the most richly endowed. The true glory is of the inward purpose and the final goal, and not of the outward act and opportunity. As, in this sense, every man is the Lord's servant, and no one can be more, the Church never departs so utterly from her task as when she teaches that the leaders are the Church, and draws distinctions which relieve the great body of the people from seeing each his own opportunity and hearing his own call.

The extent to which this is fulfilled depends first of all on our power to discern the tasks which lie to our hand. This is more a matter of sympathy than of ability. It depends on knowledge, but it is knowledge acquired among men, not among books. This penetration which discerns on every side evil to be resisted and good to be won, each man must teach himself through contact with life, through contact with men. The greatest hindrance is lofty superiority to human failings, intolerance of human imperfection, hasty condemnation of human institutions, Churches specially included. The man who discovers on every hand the Lord's service lives nearest man's sin and sorrow, knowing that God has tolerated man, and so he may, that God succours him, and so he ought. Wherefore, the last way in which he would dream of serving God would be to isolate himself from his fellow men.

Life is often sordid, and the agents God uses for improving it often imperfect. But we also are poor creatures to be fellow workers with God. Yet we shall be the better as we behold the glory of the Lord, not from the pure throne of Omnipotence above, but from the earth with the sins and struggles of man below. Only when we know the evil He is transforming to good and the imperfect instruments with which He works, can we see what place He has for us in His working. To be the Lord's servant, the eyes are not to be turned away from the misery of earth, even to be directed to the joys of a far-off heaven, but with unaverted gaze we are to see all life, its

highest and its lowest, its promise and its misery, and behold everywhere our opportunity and our call.

Such knowledge, however, is not what is called "seeing life." Life is seen after a fashion, but only through a whirling phantasmagoria of amusements, business, respectabilities, conventions. Then the beauty and the grime of the world all appear mixed together in utter confusion. Many things may be learned about life, but life itself is unknown. In complacency and shallowness the man who has "seen life" esteems himself for his knowledge and has great pity and even contempt for the recluse. Yet he might spare a little for himself, for seclusion is not as heavy a veil upon life as distraction. More than the recluse this man of the world beats a retreat from life. Could he endure to retire with a vision of the world's misery in his heart, sacked towns and harried homesteads, men at bay with death and worse than death, with the remembrance of his own error and weakness and sin, and of dear schemes thwarted and dearer affections disappointed, to look it all in the face and hear, amid the silence of nature, the voice of God speaking in his soul?

Yet the Lord's servant should have no manner of veil upon his face, either of distraction or of isolation. He should be in the world, beholding it all the more clearly for not being of it. With his face unveiled, going whither God leads, seeing steadily all God sets before him of good and hopeful or sinful and sad and base, discovering the firstfruits of God's victory in Christ's Cross, yet knowing also the might of the sin

which crucified Him, he must look upon the glory of the Lord stretching before him, through sacrifice and service, up to the Kingdom of souls set free, promising a harmony securer than the vastest dominion of unchanging law, and bearing blessings in its bosom which make rich and add no sorrow of misuse or evanescence.

True knowledge of life is such a knowledge of man as teaches us to discern in him something of the value he has for his Maker. Usually we see men from so great a distance that we discern no more than their outward appearances. But the Lord's servant should stand so near to man that he sees his conscience and his heart. He knows then the worth of a personality that is self-conscious and self-determined. He knows how it is of infinite value in God's sight and should be in man's. Then men are no longer for him mere pawns in the game of life, or the individual merely one of the multitude, but the weakest and the basest is still a soul made in the image of God, whose individual responsibility, even in the misuse, shows the possibility of some day recovering it.

If the Lord's servant have this penetration, he will not only discern his duties, but he will know in what spirit they should be performed. Seeing souls made in God's image, whose ultimate destiny of good or ill must be their own responsibility, the Lord's servant must not strive, but be gentle towards all men, apt to teach, less apt to refute, forbearing, not compelling, dealing meekly even with those who "oppose themselves." This desire not to strive arises from no

sense of weakness, and from no flagging in the strife. It is the discovery of man's worth in God's sight, and that the chief hindrance, the only hindrance, is man's own resistance to God's working. In thus recognizing what it must overcome, he understands God's method. The humanness of Divine truth, the tolerance of the Divine government, are of a piece, both showing how God deals with us as with children. So the servant of the Lord sees that truth has to be sown in season and ripened in the field of experience. Honest error he will regard as only a misunderstanding of the truth, to be corrected by manifesting the truth and not by denouncing the misunderstanding. He is also taught that no man can organize any effort to help others who has not first been organized by the Divine discipline of life in his own soul. And this makes him less anxious to correct evil than to be sure that righteousness is not misrepresented in his own character and conduct.

In the first place, he is thus enabled to tolerate evil without any danger of accepting it. He would tolerate as God tolerates and resist as God resists. God's tolerance is not of the strictly limited kind found among men, not of the kind which is largely dependent upon indifference to the issues and which is abandoned as soon as there is conflict with living ideas and interests. God, on the other hand, tolerates the vastest evils, evils He abhors, evils hostile to His purpose and contrary to His will. The man who knows the evil of his own heart and has found the blessed uses of God's patience for

overcoming it there, and the worthlessness of suppressing its mere visible manifestations, knows that this is not acceptance of evil. The man who hastily denounces all human imperfection, and who would sweep it off the face of the earth by one almighty fiat, merely measures life by narrow rules and does not look within to see the very worldliness and pride, the effect of which they deplore. But the servant of the Lord, judging all things according to their value for the soul of man, is enabled, as God does, to be patient with error and sin, knowing that, though they destroy man's freedom and are to be hated, the permission of them is necessary to his victory. Peremptory ways with our fellow men, many hasty attempts at reform, by regulations and endeavours to guide men aright in their own despite, are less the result of our love for man than of our ignorance of ourselves and of the true dignity of human nature.

In the second place, the servant of the Lord is enabled to endeavour after good without misunderstanding it. He will not expect to find any organization of any section of the Church a pure expression of the spirit of Christ. No society, he knows, obtains much better guidance than it deserves. He discovers that the true order is not "like priest like people," but one that sets responsibility on a wider basis, "like people like priest." He expects to find the Church and the world mingled, and he is not dismayed by the presence of evil. But what does dismay him is calm satisfaction with evil. Good and evil may be commingled, but it should be in conflict

not in amity. Judging by this endeavour and not by any hasty rule of perfection, he will learn to esteem much that others despise. Through association, his thought may be narrow, but his heart and his hope will take a wider range, and he will estimate all the Church's institutions and forms and associations by the fidelity with which they are directed towards the purpose of the Kingdom of God and the humility and the patience with which this aim is sought by the method of freedom not of domination. What is apparently strongest in a Church may to him appear its weakness. The desire for conquest is for him only a worldly vanity, unless it spring from a freedom which longs to set men free and from a love which longs to extend the blessings of love. Wealth, prestige, rank may rather tempt and blind than guide and enlighten. Upon them the fire may have to pass, nay, by our doubts and divisions and conflicts, is even now passing. As he sees that to make the Church a great conquering force, she must be established on the free devotion of her children, bound together by the union of love, he knows that the shaking of weaker foundations to make her build on the only enduring foundation may be gain.

CHAPTER IX

A FORGOTTEN SACRAMENT

The Master's provision against a danger He had created. A sacrament of failure. Use of symbols. Significance of plain manifestation of truth. Pain and resolution. Love not silent. Church must learn to depart from a city. Glory and dominion in failure. False aids.

THOUGH God, from a tender regard to the spirits of His children made in His own image with this power of free choice of good or evil, endures much resistance to His will and confusion in His world, His servant is not always able to escape the temptation to be peremptory when he has power and hysterical when he lacks it. The sense of responsibility in face of the sad estrangement from God of the souls he cannot convince, and of the narrow limits of any aid one soul can give another, has often led to hard antagonism and hurtful insistence.

Nor has any one done more than Christ Himself to create this danger. He so taught His followers to value truth and love men that it may seem impossible to admit failure. Men's greatest dangers lie near their grand virtues, and His servants might have laboured at the impossible till their faith was tried beyond endurance, and their usefulness came to an end. Or what would have been worse, the energy, which should have been spent in the proclamation

of the truth, would have been diverted to the embellishment of it. When man could not be raised to the truth of Christ, the temptation would have been strong, all else having failed, to lower the truth of Christ nearer to his level. In later ages, no cause operated more disastrously for the corruption of Christianity; and its baleful influence is not yet ended.

Our Lord knew this danger which beset His followers. He knew not only the hastiness of human nature, but the earnestness He Himself had inspired which calls man to endurance, the humility which would be ready to accept blame for failure, and the devotion which might persist, not merely to the useless sacrifice of life, but to the sadder loss of faith. Therefore, He not only warned His disciples against this kind of resistance of evil, but safeguarded them by a sacrament of failure.

His own life makes plain that "Resist not evil" does not mean, "Offer it no opposition." What it means, as His whole bearing in face of evil shows, is that we are not to waste our strength in mere conflict, mere denunciation, mere negation, but to believe that evil can be overcome by good, and only by good.

But when He instructed them to shake off solemnly the dust from their shoes as a testimony and to depart from the place where they had delivered their message and it had not been received, He went further, and taught them that the final responsibility even for overcoming evil with good was not theirs.

Their duty was circumscribed by present call and opportunity. They were not to adapt their message to make it more acceptable, nor to resort to any other device to win success, but simply to deliver their message and leave the responsibility for accepting it with men's own souls, and for the final success with God. Thus they were no more to waste their energy and sacrifice their peace in making good victorious than in opposing evil. This is the significance of what we have called the sacrament of failure.

To her great loss the Church seems to have forgotten it. Yet the Master appointed for it a solemn and impressive symbol when first He sent forth His servants to their work in the world. The use of symbol by our Lord was of the rarest. And this infrequency is the more to be noted that it was abundantly employed in the religion of His time and was familiar to the people among whom He taught. Only four symbols has He commended to His Church. Three of them are universally acknowledged to embody central principles of His teaching. The truth that His religion differs from all others by having, as its first condition, a change of heart, is set forth in the simple rite of washing with water. The truth that His Church is a brotherhood, an intimate fellowship both with Himself and with one another, is presented by that common symbol of closest intercourse, a supper. The gift of the Divine Spirit, necessary for any office or for any undertaking, has, as its simple and natural symbol, the laying on of hands. Can it be then that the most

vivid, the most public, the most ceremonious of all the symbolic acts appointed by Him was without a like central meaning? Why should His servants, to the enraging of their opponents and the endangering of their own lives, solemnly shake the dust from their shoes as a witness against the city where their word had been rejected, unless it also embodied a fundamental principle of His Kingdom? This impression is deepened by considering the circumstances amid which it was appointed. The disciples were being set apart to the great work which was to be the absorbing occupation of their later life, in which all were to suffer and many were to die. This rite of shaking the dust off their shoes appointed at such a moment could be nothing less than a sacrament of the renunciation of all the methods by which the Kingdom of God is not to be advanced, designed to impress on His servants an attitude towards their work imperative for their ultimate progress, for their own peace of mind, and, above all, for the preservation of the truth in its purity. Perhaps, even in His life of superhuman thoughtfulness and care for others, there is no more striking instance of His consideration for the limitations of our nature, and His Divine prevision of our greatest dangers.

It set for all who go forth in His name the due limit of their endeavour. Their task is to manifest the truth in plainness and humility, not striving, but being gentle towards all men. They have no duty of embellishing it, much less of putting anything else in its place. If their message is not received, the true

significance of a plain, God-inspired messenger of the truth is then to be made manifest. His appearance in any place is not an insignificant or temporary matter. He may be no orator, but, if he has not spoken the truth well, he has at least lived it well. Being rejected, he may not go away quietly and allow things to return to their ordinary course, while men say, What else was to be expected, for who was this to turn the world upside down? He departs, but he leaves his responsibility behind. Whether practised in actual symbol or not, every one of the Lord's servants pauses at the border and shakes the dust off his shoes for a testimony, lifting the responsibility from his own shoulders and laying it on those who have heard with the ear and have refused to hear with the heart. Then a man may, like Paul, cry in his heart, "I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake," and at the same time be enabled to say, "Seeing you thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." This anguished turning from doors that are closed to those that are open is of the faith which works by a love which is God's purpose and not merely man's motive. The human agent lays down his task, but he does not merely abandon it. He leaves it with God, knowing that God will take it up again, in judgment, it may be, but in a judgment directed by love. With the close of opportunity, man's task lies elsewhere, but God has other occasions and other messengers. Faith speaks and says, all is in God's hands. And love is not silent ;

for, where is love without the recognition that man is God's child, so that his fellow man cannot take his heart and mould it to belief, but the final responsibility for any decision, even the highest, is between man and God, not between man and man?

It is the want of this reverence for the Divine in man which has left the Church so ignorant of the limits of human jurisdiction as to dream either of driving or cajoling any soul even into the right path. Under the delusion that success must be hers, that her failure is God's failure, that, because a cause deserves to win, she must find means to make it win, the Church has too frequently been mixed up in matters outside her province, and has used means which are not God's. God has made in every heart a sanctuary into which only the persuasion of love has a right to enter, a sanctuary into which He Himself will not, with any other means, force an entrance. In view of this great fact, the Church should learn from her Lord how to fail, how to make failure her last and greatest appeal, how to fail, not in discouragement, much less in indifference, but in faith and hope and love.

There is as much need now, as ever in the past, to learn how to depart from a city in which she is not received on her own proper appeal. She may not seize upon some section of it, and barricade the streets with social dignities or half worldly institutions or popular superstitions and practices. If the plain manifestation of the truth fail, she may not make it more accommodating. Towards ignorance there

should be patience, towards weakness pity, but towards obstinate rejection of truth because it demands humility and a pure heart, and towards lofty superiority to it because a man has seated himself high in the chair of the scorner, the only duty remaining is to make it known that the responsibility abides with the man himself before God. The task of the true Church is only to manifest the truth, a large enough task at any time, and not easier in days of outward prosperity and quiet, when the individual Churches are apt to become becushioned temples of respectability. The final task of winning men's hearts for it, is not the Church's but God's. Were it otherwise, how might humility abide in us with courage, love with fidelity, peace with responsibility, holiness with devotion to our task?

The Church's error has been less lack of zeal for men's good than a misunderstanding of what their true good consists in. Oftener she has tried too much than too little. Her faith and love have not been equal either to the limitation or the vastness of the aim to "make a man a man and let him be." On the contrary, too often she has imagined that to make a man a man and advance him beyond pupilage, was to miscarry in her mission. Man's sight is so purblind that, at a very little distance, especially a very little elevation, he sees in other men very little more than their clothes. A gift of Divine compassion, an endowment from the Infinity which knows narrowly as well as broadly, alone can maintain in the Church an adequate sense that nothing is

supremely great in life but the soul of man, in its individuality, its varied presentation of the Divine image in which it was made. It is never rightly valued except at the worth it has to the Heavenly Father, and that depends on what the man himself, by his own choice and consecration, may become. By this excellency of perception the Church would best display herself as the body of Christ. Like Him, she would prove her Divine origin by the certainty of her hold upon the individual need, by the impossibility of obscuring it from her by distance in race or rank or education, or by losing the individual in the crowd. Only when the Church lacks this discrimination, does she think truth, manifested in the word and the life of men of faith, an instrument too weak to prevail without other aid, and conquest of hearts too slow a process, unless furthered by other successes. But then, in her blindness, she will accept pious superstition, as a power easier to use than to combat, and trust much to mere numbers and mass, and be satisfied to control, by the aid of social prestige and the fixed conventions of society, without the necessity of delaying to persuade the human will. These means, once relied on, speedily come to be regarded as the chief assurance of success. Then it is but a step to desire that the civil authority be embarked also in the Church's enterprise—as junior partner if possible, as senior if necessary. In return for her support in maintaining civil order and lightening the burden of policing the people, she requires from it protection, aid and worldly status.

But this purity of the spiritual appeal is no mere question of Church and State ; and is very far from being settled when that connection is renounced. The Church might cease to rely in any way upon the civil power, yet her true aim and method not be recovered. She might still fail to depart from the city in which she is not received by faith and willing submission, and continue to maintain her place by the many influences which control the will, without the necessity of manifesting the truth to every man's conscience. Before she can be received into a city, as at once possessing and increasing freedom, she must learn to renounce far more than the support of the magistrate. She requires also to forsake all the external influences, for which the aid of civil government is sought and which civil governments must always control, and to rely entirely upon faith and the free consent of the persuaded will, making it manifest that she must depart from every place in which this is denied her. To renounce State aid is little. Her work must be undertaken after a fashion which would leave no purpose of hers to be served by the method of the State, even at its best.

This does not mean that a truly spiritual Church is of no value for civil order or a rightly governed State for spiritual well-being, but it means that they rest on different foundations, and, while the State should rest more and more on individual liberty, the Church may not at all rest on compulsion.

With her present mingled ambitions, the main cause of the Church's trust in her own method and

of such limitation of her jurisdiction as makes her tolerable, as a free institution in a free State, is much less her self-restriction than her weakness. Instead of mourning over the present loss of privilege, should she not rather recognize the dispensation of a wise Providence, appointed to teach her the wealth of her own resources, to give her a higher idea of the patience of God, and to show her a truer view of the Kingdom of His children, whom, by the sole method of truth and obedience, He has set free?

CHAPTER X

THE THREE TEMPTATIONS

The Master's agony in taking failure to His heart. *In league with the stones.* Living by a word from the mouth of God. *The reward of compromise.* Genial sarcasm. An ultimatum. *The heart's poor reverence.* A Saviour's Marathon. Lofty sacerdotal dignity. The impious way of humiliation. "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

THE Church's temptations to seek a hastier triumph are many and seductive, and are always altering from age to age. Only by renewing, in every age, her contemplation of her great Example, can she hope to learn the patience and endurance necessary to keep her to the narrow boundaries of that strait gate by which alone she can conduct men to life. Just because our Lord's vision of the glory of the consummation was clearest and His love to the erring deepest, He felt the temptations to haste with a power which has been spared our greater blindness and our harder hearts. So arduous was the struggle that He fasted forty days and felt no hunger, the claims of nature being suspended in the agony of taking failure to His heart as the bitter but necessary way to enduring success. And in His rejection of the three great temptations to haste, which assail all who in any dim way recognize His aim or seek His triumph in the world, He has determined once for

all, for His Church as well as for Himself, the means which may not be employed in His name.

The temptations are to take a hasty way with, first, the material world ; second, society ; and third, the human heart : or, in other words, with the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye and pride of life.

The material world determines man's first task, which is to win for himself bread. To many still it is a task so hard, so absorbing, so grinding, so sordid, that no word would sound so emancipating as that which made the stones bread. All our Lord's days upon earth He lived very close to this struggle. To the people among whom He lived sixpence was a large coin. Kings and rich men are shadowy figures in parable ; the living figures are the beggar and the debtor. To be without compassion for the poor is to have no part in His Kingdom, and to sell everything to succour the poor seemed to Him no unreasonable sacrifice.

There in the wilderness our Lord saw, as no other could see, the glory of Eden restored. The curse is withdrawn from the earth, and man eats no longer in the sweat of his brow. The furrows of toil smooth out of his forehead, lost innocence replaces cunning in his greedy eyes, the joy of youth flushes and fills his haggard cheek. He need no more be a drudge and a slave, but may lift up his head in the freedom of a child of God ; and his thoughts will not be distracted from the search after his true spiritual heritage. The Master felt in Himself the power to accomplish this restoration. He saw Himself, as a

Giver of Bread, everywhere received, in every way honoured. Then, would not the Christ of God, Who came with greater riches for a deeper need, be proclaimed by a manifest and acceptable evidence of His authority?

At no time more than the present, has the Church had more of her Master's sympathy or set a higher value on turning the stones into bread. Without this change first, no other seems possible. Men whose peace of mind is more nourished by physical well-being than by grace, readily conclude that one is as much a spiritual necessity as the other. The grudging stones which scowl through the thin soil, denying man his daily bread, come to be looked upon as the chief religious hindrance, and the highest of all religious promises to be, "The stones of the field shall be in league with thee." Then it is looked upon as an axiom that the first duty of the Church is by large, easy, comprehensive methods of charity, organization, and, if need be, legislation, to turn the world into a place of universal well-being. Is it not, men confidently ask, the Church's duty to fight the oppressions which rob men of the due reward of their toil, to control the ignorance which wastes their resources, to encourage regulations which lead to more effective combination? Should she withhold her hand from the task of sanitation? Should she not even take her share in providing recreation? Should not her aim be to introduce into the whole realm of material things a beneficent era of Christian supervision and control?

Yet the Master chose another way, and He has this justification from experience, that the result hitherto has been less to turn the stones of the world into bread, than to turn the bread of the world into stone. When men have asked for bread, for faith to strengthen and love to cheer their hearts, they have been offered the stone of regulation and cold, hard charity.

Our Lord also did not turn aside from man's need. At no time has He said, "What matter man's body, if only his soul be saved!" But He has chosen a more patient method in order to gain a surer victory. The stones of the field are still to be in league with man, but after a higher fashion which will be more abundantly for his spiritual profiting. Man fed full is often himself only a clod. To begin without difficulties is to end without victories. The stones he must himself remove, the obstacles he must himself overcome, feed in him something nobler than appetite. For man's sake, it is said, God cursed the earth, that it should present him difficulties to overcome, and make him earn his bread in the sweat of his brow. The need for doing our own share and co-operating with others has been the spring of all man's higher achievements. The same task should feed the body and nourish the soul. Mere drudgery fails to do either effectively. Yet to escape it by an Eden without duty, without the need of personal sympathy, without the call for practical helpfulness, would not be creation's triumph but its failure. Where it does exist, the satisfaction of appetite

becomes a mere lust of the flesh, and all other fleshly lusts flourish with it.

The Master, therefore, would not forestall the word of love by the word of power. Instead of turning the stones into bread, He laid aside His riches and joined Himself to the number of the poor. Thus He was enabled to teach, on one hand, the personal, loving sympathy which alone can relieve without degrading by the relief, and, on the other, the joyful faith which knows how to want without a sense of the curse of being poor. Thus He became Himself the Word of God, whereby man's very wants and hindrances are turned into the riches of faith, submission, aspiration and holiness; whereby the stones of the field are made in league with man to nourish his mortal flesh without starving his immortal spirit.

The second temptation comes from a society which is ruled by the lusts of the eye. Satan, not God, seems to rule, and the most earnest are not least dismayed by the dominion. Self-interest, love of pleasure, pride of place, lust and passion are too surely lords of conduct. Love is too often set aside as a weakness, and righteousness as a folly. The surest road to success is dexterity in accommodating oneself to the temper of the time.

Such an acknowledgment of Satan's dominion comes easily from those who have accepted it; but sympathy with man, insight into his conflicts, and the most intense desire to accomplish good in the world, often lead to the same conclusion. Society is

felt to be founded on endless injustice, to be held together by base compromise, to be full of hypocritical commendation of some forms of evil and hypocritical condemnation of others, custom to be a higher sanction than righteousness, and outward show to be more esteemed than integrity. Finally, the profession of religion becomes only another form of paying heed to appearances, another form of devotion to the false and worldly. Into this society, which has for ages been preparing his reception, every man is born. The moment he appears on earth it begins to work upon him ; and, as he arrives at speech and understanding, it enlarges its operations. Not till he has grown into the belief that things cannot be any better than they are, or only very little better, and that wrong is made right by the sanction of age, and injustice just by sufficient profit, is it satisfied with his education. In this estimate the servant does not differ from his Master, who thought that the Prince of this world was the Father of Lies, which is to say that it is governed entirely by outward shows.

To save men, therefore, and leave society alone is impossible. Yet what choice is there between concession and repudiation ? How can Christ have any dealings with it, except by bringing down His demands in some measure to its level ? For such compromise the arguments are manifold. Why need He uselessly rouse its opposition ? Except by recognizing facts as they exist, how can He make a beginning ? To break with it abruptly is to show Himself

unreasonable and above all unpractical. As possession has its rights and custom its justification, would anything but fanaticism refuse them deference? On this subject Satan has a wealth of genial sarcasm at command. And what mightier instrument of persuasion is there than genial sarcasm? Had Jesus only seen matters in this light, had He consented to some measure of compromise, had He offered a prudent measure of homage, His immediate success would have been great and impressive. And why, when the speedy extension of His dominion would have been of great benefit to the world, could He not have accepted the measure of improvement which would not have been refused, even though it should have been at the cost of some small concession to the evil that remained?

But to Jesus it is worshipping Satan, and the secret of His power lies in this very refusal, in this unshakable resolve not to have a merely outwardly better world. He would have the right principle applied even with apparent failure, in preference to the wrong accompanied by the most triumphant immediate success. Society also He will not forsake, and by man's side in his struggle with its evil He will ever stand. But He sees deliverance only in complete rejection of this worldly Satanic rule. With it He will have no compromise. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." That is an ultimatum, rejecting diplomacy, and calling in the sword. All success, it says, or none. And then He went forth, no sovereign

potentate of all realms, no darling of the great, no idol of any class. Rejected by all the kingdoms of this world and an outcast from all its societies, He lived ; and He died amid what, to all outward appearance, was ignominy and failure. Yet this failure, from meek repudiation of all compromise with evil, alone has given promise of a power able to renovate society. He has left to His Church the same lesson of how to succeed by consenting to fail. And the true Church still bears the lesson in her heart, even though the Churches may seem to have forgotten it, seeing how they deliver no ultimatum, demanding all and refusing less, but make their bargain with the Prince of this world, with a success never attained by their Lord and Master, but also with a loss He never knew.

The third temptation comes from the heart, whose reverence is given to the pride of life. Were the reverences of a man's own heart not so poor, nothing would be beyond him, and he might only be the holier for resisting the evil society around him and the stronger for toiling against the opposition of the world without him. Least of all, therefore, may a Saviour leave the soul undelivered from the poor reverence of its own heart. Here is a Saviour's Marathon, to win or lose. And here His supreme difficulty appears, for false reverence estranges most from God, and from all the divine things by which God might make His appeal.

From the pinnacle of the temple our Lord looked down upon this spectacle of man's poor reverence.

He looked upon man at his devotions and saw the highest and purest religious service the world afforded. Yet there was all manner of religious zeal, and no manner of religious reverence. He saw bargaining and selling—a hard battle between display and meanness. There was much superstition and awe, and little humility and devotion. Yet was not this the highest form of religious worship then existing?

Was there any possible appeal to it, except the impressiveness of display? Must not the Messiah who would be accepted make Himself conspicuous in the eyes of an assembled world? What avails to appeal to any other reverence for greatness except what man possesses? And all that was needed was to come visibly descending from heaven, in order to impress with astonishment and wonder. How, without courting failure, may a Saviour of men reject this appeal? From the ends of the earth this multitude had come hither, shrinking from no sacrifice and deterred by no danger. Within its limits, no service could be more sincere. Ought it not, therefore, with all its imperfection, to be accepted and used? Should not the best be made of it, as some day a better reverence may be built on it? In any case was there any other beginning.

The only alternative to impressing by display is to impress by service. This meant the bitter way of humiliation, which Satan suggests is as impious as it is futile. What more inspired word is there in Scripture than "He shall give His angels charge

concerning Thee, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone" ? And is not this way of service all dashing of the foot against stones ? And what does it avail ? Does it not end, as such a way would naturally end, with the bitterest cry ever wrung from any anguished soul, " My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me " ? The sole result is a few broken-hearted women and a handful of dismayed and self-distrustful men.

But Jesus does not see Himself lightly descending in radiant flowing robe, to take the first part in high religious ceremonial while the multitudes receive Him with acclaim. Superstitious awe is not for Him true reverence, nor the way to it. A far different spectacle unrolls before His eyes. He sees Himself laboriously going up Calvary bearing His cross, while the same multitude shouts " Crucify Him." Then for sole answer He replies, " Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Thou shalt do something quite different. Thou shalt trust Him, not with word only, but with all thy life, not in any wise doubting that He will give His angels charge concerning thee, concerning thee in particular, but also knowing that this protection is promised, not in the way thou mightest choose for thyself, because it promises what impresses man, but in the way which He, who knows all the course of life, in eternity as well as in time, has chosen for thee, because it leads to inward reality and true service. In this way alone can man learn all he should adore, all that should claim his heart, all that glorifies his life, all that will count as true success when all vic-

tories are known. By no departure from it can man be helped ; and the only one of the sons of men who has accomplished any deliverance for man is He who was despised and rejected of men, but who, nevertheless, has seen of the travail of His soul and been satisfied. And though the Churches have too often used the temple pinnacle of impressive display, of sacerdotal miracle, of hierarchical dignity, in short, of the pride of life, yet His true Church has never failed to understand His choice, nor in some imperfect manner to abide by it, seeking, as He did, to commend herself by meekness of service, and having faith to wait for the true reverence, which alone can see its glory.

CHAPTER XI

THE GREAT ALTERNATIVE

The problem of Christ's mission. The appeal of love. What love will and will not do. Making a show of the principalities and powers. The hesitation of the Churches. The true Church's acceptance.

POWER, compromise, and display are all necessary to temporal dominion. But, if the problems of nature, society, and the heart of man could have been solved by the way of might, they would never, under the government of Omnipotence, have existed from the beginning. If God is to be justified, they must admit of a higher solution. To be the Son of God and leave them unsolved is impossible. He may not choose between turning the stones into bread and leaving man's spiritual nature to succumb in the struggle for existence ; between worshipping Satan and leaving society to rot in its own corruption ; between casting Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple and leaving man's religion to sink under its idolatries. To deal with these evils is the problem of His mission ; and the proof that He is the Son of God must depend, for man at least, upon His solution of it. The alternative before our Lord was not between doing something and doing nothing, between the solution of might and no solution at all, but was between doing something for man by might

and doing everything by love. To reject the appeal of might, was to accept the appeal of love with its sacrifice of ease and happiness and honour and life.

Wherefore, from the day Satan left Him in the wilderness, His face was set to go up to Jerusalem, to be rejected and mocked and crucified. The way of the Cross was the great alternative to the way of compromising with the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye and the pride of life ; and it stretched straight before Him, through Gethsemane and the High Priest's Hall and the soldiers' common room, right on to Calvary. The men who would have rushed in multitudes to the wielder of might, shout " Crucify Him, crucify Him " to the worker of love. He trod the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with Him, for, while men would have praised Him above all the sons of men had He done well to Himself, they only curse Him when He does well to them. But, as He goes, He takes the world's failure to receive the highest and best with Him, and He endures for the soul of man, that has rejected in Him its true good because it has been crushed by worldly cares, misled by worldly shows, and degraded by worldly reverences. In that hour of His seeming failure He took man as he is to His heart and met all his need ; and the principalities and powers, in which man has trusted, were made a show of openly and manifested in all their weakness and futility.

The love which has appointed man's struggle, is also the solution of it. It is a love which will not

remove conflict, but will give man the fruits of victory. It will not put man's carnal nature before his spiritual; but it will endure all privation, to deliver him from the slavery of material things and make the necessity of living by bread a spiritual task and a gracious discipline. It will enter into no compromises with society; but it will endure all ignominy, to enable man to see what is God's reality beneath the shows of visible dominion and glory. It will not appeal to man's superstition and love of the marvellous; but, to draw the reverence of an answering love, it will go up bearing its cross. It is a love which has patience, not to alter the environment and leave the soul as it was, but to save the soul and so to place it in a right and divine relation to all its environment. Then the victory will come not from without but from within, and the principalities and powers will be dethroned in the world, because they have first been dethroned in the heart. Love will not deliver from struggle. That at best would be foolish fondness. But Infinite Love does everything for man to make him "more than conqueror."

To make a similar show of the principalities and powers, the Church has only to accept the sole alternative to their dominion, and be crucified with Christ. She must learn that the first word of God to her is not even love to God. The first word is love to man. On the other hand, however, the first object of her adoration is God, who because He is love, is to be worshipped, not in awe, but in spirit and in truth.

Aided largely by God's wise limitation of wealth, honour and impressiveness, no section of the Church has ever quite forgotten the great alternative to worldly dominion ; none has ever been altogether ignorant that it is the way of the Cross. But how often have the hearts of all fainted at the long and toilsome journey, so that they have remained standing at the dividing of the ways, now accepting Satan's suggestions as necessities of the situation, now rejecting them as temptations of evil ; now with sad eyes turning to Calvary as the mount of hope, the supreme emblem of power as well as love, now turning with burning eyes away from its sadness and its pain. Doubtful enough would have been the Church's gain, had she no other labours to look to than the organized efforts of the Churches. But in them all there have been those who, for the most part it may be, have served in humble spheres, who have placed their reliance on victory from within, and have known that it could only be the reward of service, not of domination. In sympathy with the poor, in uncompromising opposition to evil, in unswerving allegiance to the highest, they have been crucified with Christ. But, in their patience of service, Calvary is to them the mount of hope where what dies in weakness rises in power.

CHAPTER XII

THE EVERLASTING ORDER

A new political, social, and material order. The aims Christ ignored. The Pharisee and the Publican. The only evil Christ denounced. The new order. The testimony of the centuries. The aim and method not changed. The Cross the symbol of the Church. A symbol of power, not of weakness.

THE supreme task before the Church is to learn the power of the Cross. It introduces a new religious order ; and this brings in its train a new political, social, and even material order. If we care to use such language, we can speak of it as a new stage of development, the introduction of a new principle of evolution. The individual struggle may still go on. There may still be selection of the fittest. But the fitness is not in mere strength to seek and devour the prey. It is in freedom of self-restraint, regard for others, submission to the guidance of love, in short it is fitness for our place in God's final order. The best are only learning its rudiments, so mixed with the old that it is only half understood even by those who accept it. The temptation to fall back upon the old order of compulsion and forsake the new order of freedom, ever besets man whose eyes are weak and whose days are few. Only by continually throwing down the high tower of his creed and dispersing the phalanx

of his organization can God deliver him from warring after the flesh and set him anew to his high task of rearing a Kingdom of God.

This Kingdom of God is not concerned merely or even mainly with the things we call sacred, but is a transformation of man first and, through this great change, of all his surroundings, even to the material nature which is now his foe only because of anxiety on one hand and misuse on the other. For this reason Christ leaves many things alone. More than any other He sees the evil. Superstitious ceremonies, social wrongs, robberies and oppressions He would overthrow. Yet He never turns aside to deal with them directly. Aims which many good men regard with enthusiasm as their highest endeavour He scarce honoured with a passing glance. It is altogether very strange to think of the number of schemes which never drew so much as a word of approval from Him. He has no scheme for improving the Temple services, none for reorganizing the synagogue, no political schemes, no social reforms.

His whole attitude is summed up in His estimate of men, above all, as seen in His relations with the Pharisees and the publicans. Instead of esteeming it a work of supreme merit, as men have ever done, to turn a disreputable, non-Church-going publican into a reputable, Church-going, outwardly decorous and consistent member of the community, He did not seem to think He would thereby save a soul from death, or indeed accomplish any smaller measure of good, but often found Himself nearer

the heart of the disreputable than of the highly respected. To understand this estimate of men is to understand His whole estimate of good.

The sole evil our Lord turned aside to denounce was just this Pharisaic leaven of respectability. The reason for the exception was that, while other evils the new order would amend, by this evil the new order was denied.

Not only does this leaven of the Pharisees still exist ; it is too often the leaven of the Christian Churches. It is an attitude towards life, and includes every endeavour to rest life on external judgment, on reputable custom, on any less stable foundation than a penitent and obedient heart. To our Lord it seemed no more than an attempt to extend the dominion of hypocrisy, an attempt not to remove the evil, but only to shut it in to grow and work in secret. No other state, nor even the most grossly wicked, seemed so far from penitence, and, therefore, from hope.

The new order, for which we pray and for which our prayer is a title to hope and a call to labour, is summed up in the petition, "Thy will be done on earth as in heaven." This would not be answered by making bare the right hand of the Most High in the most vigorous restraint of evil. The blessing of the obedience of heaven is not complete subjection, but perfect freedom. We cannot pray for it, therefore, merely in the consciousness of God's might. It requires an abiding sense of the wise patience of His love. To pray "Thy will be done"

in the consciousness of God's might were easy and no great triumph of faith. But "as in Heaven" requires us to pray in love, with the assurance that God's will is love, and that this love, which alone is the blessed bond of heaven, can also triumph in earth. It is also the victory which overcomes the world. Faith in the fulfilment of such a prayer is possible only in the light of the revelation of God's love. The highest, which is the Cross of His Son, shows how love, commanding all the resources of omniscience and omnipotence, is behind every will of erring man and every incident of his changeful life. Thereby we know that it is capable of the supreme task of transforming man without assailing his freedom, of transforming him, on the contrary, out of slavery into the liberty of the children of God, and, through this change, of transmuting all his surroundings to the farthest limit. This is the faith which exercises both the patience and the persistence of God.

The Master's aim and method have not been changed. What was His chief hindrance while He lived on earth has not, by any alchemy, been turned into His chief help. Particular reforms are still worthless apart from a complete change of faith. The power of His Cross to crucify the soul to the world, and the world to the soul, alone works this change, transferring faith from the seen to the unseen. This method time has not changed, but confirmed. Reforms by regulation and compulsion have ended not in failure merely, but in reaction. Whereas what springs from changed thoughts and

intents of the heart, if it is a fruit slow to grow, is at least sound and without canker.

Would the Church do her Master's work after His method, she must make her claims as high and as low as His own. She must at once know the absoluteness of the Divine end and the gentleness of the Divine method of seeking it. She too must regard every improvement as more or less a hypocrisy, some day in time or eternity to be unmasked, which is based only on the sands of outward reformation and is not laid on the bed rock of inward renovation. To this end she must ever exalt the Cross as the symbol of highest rule, the fullest revelation of the Divine sovereignty. It is the sign of power, because it is the symbol of the might which shall transform all things by transforming all hearts, the symbol of the everlasting order of conscious freedom in God's rule of love.

But it is the Cross, not the Crucifix. The Christ of haggard bloodless cheek and agonized eyes, the Christ who is only a symbol of weakness, like a reed in the grasp of the storm, may have touched hearts to pity, and through pity to love, but more often it is only a subtle form of self-pity and self-love. It is the Christ overcoming sin and sorrow and death and defeat, who sets up God's will of love in the freedom with which it rules in Heaven, and so delivers us from the self-pity and self-love which is caused by the fear and the favour of the world. In this perfecting of might through weakness, the unchanging harmony of the stars in their courses

has been outdone, and the heart of the Infinite has found its manifestation. Above the compulsion of necessary law, up to the perfect harmony of an obedience bound only by the free choice of a love which beats in harmony with the heart of the Eternal, we are called to aspire. And what it has been the glorious work of time to begin, it will be the glorious work of eternity to complete. In the faith of this completion we must live now, not striving and crying, every man in his own key, against the discords, but endeavouring to catch the ground tone of the great song which is to be the harmony of all the voices of the universe.

CHAPTER XIII

THE TWO CHRISTS

The glorified Christ. An elevation of the old order not an assertion of the everlasting order. The humiliation an episode. In the ranks of the proletariat and in the ranks of the potentates. Made perfect through suffering. Hard but sublime thought.

WERE the Cross of Christ only suffering in itself, it would only be the weak submission of frailty to resistless destiny. But in this there could be no help. Have we not enough weakness in our own lives? Are we not all examples of the frailty which finally succumbs to adversity and disease and decay? To find the Divine also overwhelmed, to find the Perfect One and the Just in no better case than ourselves, were no consolation and no encouragement. But suffering is only the glass into which we look, and what we see therein is what manner of power is really on the throne of the universe. It is a power that will be content with nothing but a rule of freedom, bound only by love and directed only by holiness. Thereby our weakness also is transformed to strength, and the lowliest service is raised to the highest place. A dominion has been founded that will reign till it has, not in mere outward subjection, but in all inward response, subdued all things to itself. Wherefore, in the face of the Crucified we

behold the glory of God, and know that it is not of the vastness and irresistibleness of His might, but is of the infinity of His thought and care, to work penitence and manifest forgiveness and to give the inheritance of peace and blessedness and victory of His children. Then we too are risen with Christ.

Yet Olivet can be used to replace, not fulfil Calvary. There, finally and most, the Church has altered the figure of her Lord. Her trust is that all power is given to Him in heaven and in earth. Nothing less could sustain her and give her the victory which makes her more than conqueror. But this belief is too often a mere elevation of the old order of government by might to the throne of the universe, and not an assertion of the supremacy of the everlasting order of love in freedom and freedom in love. She wreathes the brow of her Lord with the laurels of human kings, and she sets her own haste and violence on the throne. Then, for the might and dominion she would assert, and for which she finds no justification in the life of her Master while He lived upon earth, she finds ample justification in His risen splendour and irresistible might.

The humiliation thus comes to be regarded merely as an episode, a memorable episode indeed, but still only an episode. Jesus is viewed as humbling Himself that He might be exalted, but only as Lincoln hewed wood as a step to the presidency. The president had indeed been a woodman, but he had outlived his cabin and his axe. Thus Christ, out of love to man, laid aside His greatness, took up

for a time a life of poverty and opposition and suffering, and then laid it aside as He had taken it up, resumed His state and reappeared as the supreme autocrat to override the opposition which His temporary work of love had been unable to subdue. Thereafter, His great and wide dominion rests on the power to crush His foes.

The Church has thus created for herself two Christs and two Lords ; and she is apt, if she serves the one, to despise the other. The Christ of the humiliation was of the ranks of the proletariat. He was born among them, lived among them, worked among them. The merit of His life is the glorification of the common relationships and common duties. His work as God's Christ is accomplished by showing the commonness of all Divine things and the Divineness of all common things. There is nothing special, nothing outside the ordinary humanity which all men share. Nothing distinguished Him from any of His brethren save the perfection which is within the compass of every man's endeavour. No official dignity was His, no title, no rank, nothing that in any external matter set Him above His brethren.

But the Christ of the exaltation has been set as the chief of the potentates. What He cannot subdue under Him in freedom and love, He crushes into subjection or destroys. He is the embodiment of irresistible might, and in Him once more is set up the rude dominion of subjection in fear and weakness. No more does He embody the meekness to

which we submit in strength and peace and satisfaction, because we know that all it appoints is by a love of infinite wisdom.

The Church has then had two objects for her loyalty, of alien and even of opposite nature, and for the most part she has chosen the potentate, and has borne herself in the earth after an entirely different fashion from the Carpenter of Nazareth, forgetful that, if a benevolent despotism were the highest throne of the universe, the Highest would never have left it, and that, if God could now with autocratic power determine man's destiny, He would never for a moment have been tolerant of evil from the beginning. In this forgetfulness the Church has laid aside patience of love and humility of service, and has been content to labour for less than a Kingdom of souls made free with the glorious liberty of the children of God, and has offered grace and truth and heaven itself with a peremptoriness which showed how she had divorced the Glorified from the Crucified.

Yet, in her heart of hearts, the true Church has ever known that the figure of her Lord is not to be altered. She realizes, imperfectly it may be, but with a clearness enough to stir adoration and gratitude, that to be made perfect through suffering is of the very essence of the Divine rule of love. Love in itself, it is true, has nothing to do with suffering. It only suffers as a means to an end. Its task is ultimately to remove suffering, as well as the sin of which suffering is the effect and for which it is

a necessary discipline. But there is no easier way than suffering by which the dominion of love could be perfected. To redeem man into a sinless freedom it must suffer with him sympathetically and vicariously. This suffering, therefore, is not an exceptional incident in the Divine method, but is a manifestation in time of what is eternal. Wherefore, the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, the sign which she must see forever blazing in power upon the forehead of the sky, is the same as His sign upon earth. It is still the sign of the Cross and it still says, not, "Depart from Me, for I am high and terrible," but, "Come unto Me, all ye who are weary and heavy laden, for I am meek and lowly of heart."

The true Church consists of those who perceive this new order of souls made strong in sinless freedom, as it rises and moves in this troubled world, like the clear waters of the ocean flood rising and pulsing under the crescent moon in the troubled and muddy waters of the bay, and who knows that though the current may still be small,

It rises to the level of the cliff,
Because the great Atlantic rolls behind,
Throbbing respondent to the far-off orb.

Hard this thought of the Divine may still be, alien to human customs and human thoughts, contrary to all the preconceptions of a lower stage of progress out of which it only begins to emerge; but, if it is hard, it is also sublime. All right thoughts of God are contained in it, all revelation of His true glory. It is as the light into which we cannot look, but which

illuminates all else. In it we see a world of purpose and of hope, of wise failure and sure success, of necessary perplexity, but of undeniable certainty; a world strangely mixed as love itself, but strangely rich as only love can be.

CHAPTER XIV

THE GATES OF HADES

An everlasting dominion. Things against which the gates of Hades shall not prevail. Necessary but temporary nature of outward forms of Christianity. The unchanging authority. The Churches. Institutions and men. The Divine recognition. Safety beyond.

THE Kingdom of the Crucified is an everlasting dominion, because it is the eternal order which is freedom and the eternal bond which is love. Of this order is the Church which is ever being built, the Church against which the grave and dark oblivion shall never prevail. It is not any visible Church, but is of the Kingdom which cometh not of observation, the Church of the saints, the Church of those who have been taught, not by flesh and blood, but by the Father in heaven, and who, however dimly and imperfectly, recognize their call to the liberty of God's children and seek to live as those who know that the final order has already begun.

This true Church cannot be separated out from among men, gathered into one pure society, organized according to the Divine ideal, and directed exclusively to Christlike activities, because the Kingdom of God which she serves cannot be so separated and distinguished. The things of the spirit and the things of the flesh cannot be so divided even in one soul.

But the fleeting is ever falling away ; the gates of Hades are always prevailing against it. No outward might, no vastness or compactness of organization, avails long to avert decay and annihilation. Compulsion and assertion may play the prominent parts, but only liberty and love are eternal. Now abideth, says the Apostle, faith, hope and love. All else passes ; and if any part of our experience has entirely failed to leave some result of faith and hope and love, we have lived it in vain. Therefore, the work of any Church is vain which is not helping to rear the eternal Church in which these spiritual goods are the true and abiding possession ; and which is not hastening on to the day when other bonds will be unnecessary, because all are one in Christ.

In our present stage of progress, we see more of the scaffolding than the building. To distinguish with certainty between the temporary and the permanent is beyond our finite powers, for the scaffolding is necessary, and it is the task of some to keep it in good repair. Because outward forms of Christianity are temporary, it does not follow that they are unimportant. Upon them may depend safety, progress, effectiveness. But we must also remember that progress is arrested when all the work is devoted to the scaffolding, and that bad work can be done on good scaffolding and good work on bad. Finally, we are not to cry woe and everlasting ruin when, what we had taken to be essential to the building itself, proves to be of temporary character and falls either by quiet decay or in suddenness and clamour. Wherefore,

although it may not be in our own hands to determine whether we shall labour at the temporary means or at the eternal result, although it may not even be in our power to discriminate absolutely between them, we ought ever to be growing in the power to discriminate and ever to be more steadily keeping in our mind the real end of our labours.

This discrimination has not been made more difficult, but far easier, by the unrest and inquiry of our time. At present we are dismayed to see how much has fallen, but presently we shall wonder to see how much has stood. If the dethroning of our external human authorities turn us to the ultimate Divine authority which speaks in our own hearts, though at first it may seem that confusion has fallen upon us, we shall see in the end that we have found a surer guidance to distinguish for us the fleeting from the perennial. And what authority can stem man's passions, correct his will, teach him a higher standard than pleasure, and call him to consecrate all his powers, not to his own personal gain, but to the general and the ultimate good, if not that which makes him see that God's will is love and God's goal freedom? To rise to this height is to find all needed authority for every right thought and deed; and to fall beneath it is to come under the sway of inferior, if not actually base, compulsions.

A vague foundation this may seem, compared with the solid temporal power the Churches have so largely enjoyed. Having been for centuries educated into respect for visible power, we may long believe that the

spiritual authority is adequate only when embodied in it. The immovable rock of all authority, nevertheless, is the Peter of the common life, whose endowment is insight to perceive every revelation of God, as the ceaseless unfolding of the everlasting order in freedom through holiness and union through love. To those who have been accustomed to Churches based for ages on solid temporal power, men with merely spiritual authority may seem a very weak foundation. Should not the members derive their authority from the institution, rather than the institution from the members? A Church deriving her authority from nothing but the insight and love of her children, yet able to correct the erring, to protect the weak, to provide enterprise for the strong, to combine all together into a helpful fellowship, seems to be a hopeless and unpractical ideal, so long as man is what he is. But this is just the point. Is there any hope of a better world, till man himself is a new creation?

That, in the providence of God, many things esteemed by man as hindrances have helped forward God's Kingdom is written large upon the face of history. For us, therefore, the task is not to discuss probable effects. All forms of religious worship may suffer by the shaking of the old authorities. The Churches may undergo a period of eclipse. As now constituted, none may come unchanged through the crisis. But all search for God's ultimate authoritative word to man is vain, till we know that the cause of the Churches is not identical with the cause of religion, however intimately they may be allied, and

till we know that the Kingdom of God is not forwarded by a great deal that most conspicuously exists in all Churches. Even the greatest antiquity is no test of the perennial : for what is older than abuses ? The test of value is not what is aged, but what is eternal. The question whether the gates of darkness and oblivion prevail after a few years or a few thousand years is a small distinction in God's sight, great as it may be in ours. Against anything worthy of being permanently built into the Kingdom of God, the gates of darkness and oblivion never prevail. No other authority than God's direct word to the heart of His children endures for ever. Sooner or later the visible rule of the ecclesiastic, like the rule of the statesman, ends : and all the more utterly it passes away if, by its rigidity and hardness, the end comes in reaction against the dogmatism of too confident assertions and the peremptoriness of too unhesitating and severe control.

The permanent work is that which is done in the souls of men. To this test finally all institutions must be subjected, but the first and last question for every Church concerns men, not institutions. They are the building, the rest is all scaffolding. The man who works in this sphere is a true Church builder. His scope may be small, his Church may be only a friend, a family, a hamlet observant of his walk and conversation. But eternity is before him, and quality is all and quantity is naught, and eternity, not time, will be his vindication. He may have no earthly dignity, but, on the contrary, be a figure to be

scoffed at ; yet he is of the morning and the scoffers are of the night, and the morning will show his dignity and be his ample justification. To man his true infallibility may never appear. He is not, however, dependent on man's discovery of him. Ultimately the question of importance is not whether man can lay his hand on him and say this is the vicar of Christ, but whether God has laid His hand upon him to clothe him as His minister with righteousness and endue him with power. His power to bind or to loose is not affected by man's hasty judgment of him, or by any position he may occupy in the sight of man, but upon whether the spiritual estimate or the material, the verdict of faith or of sight, best endures the patient test of eternity. The day will declare whether he has judged Christ's judgment—and of infallibility there is no other secret, and whether He has done Christ's work—and of eternity there is no other guarantee.

The highest evidence that the Church had discovered the exalted quality of the power committed to her would be a radical change in her estimate of men. She would know her true great men and heaven-appointed leaders to be, not those who wield a little brief authority, but those endowed with power from on high. Not by dignity of place, office or title, not by the impressiveness of ancient rite or stately function, are Peter and his true successors displayed to her, but by the brave meekness which dares to move about the world in the person of Christ. To see them, she must first see their Master. Even

at Him she cannot look except through her own imperfections ; yet as she reflects His perfection, she beholds Him. To know His power, she too must have that dignity to which no earthly splendour can add impressiveness. Like Him she must find her adequate sphere in the common things of the daily life ; and she must have that Divine greatness which shines most brightly when she is most humbly human. Then she will see her Lord still moving among men and women at their household tasks, dressed in the common garments, using the common speech, surrounded by no halo of shining ray or worldly splendour, teaching by the examples of the common life, claiming no distinction when addressed, discussing without condescension, meeting opposition without annoyance, refuting without triumphing over weakness, following no aim in which any outward power or dignity could afford Him aid. Then, like her Master, she will be in the world as the embodiment of God's appeal to His children. To regard her with indifference will be impossible. She will judge no man, but her presence will judge all men, for by men's attitude towards her they will be continually judging themselves. The heart which responds to her in love will stand approved, if not in all its thoughts and actions, yet in all it seeks and trusts and loves, if not in the perfection of mastery, yet in the aspiration which leads to mastery. The heart which hates her will stand condemned in all that is truly its own and is not the fruit of custom, association, and the fear of man.

The way that leads to this consummation may be long, and God's constant refusal to allow us any nearer resting place may be full of discouragement for men whose days are few and evil ; but we are false to the highest, if this is truly God's large and gracious plan, and if we have caught any glimpse of it, yet fear the toil and the danger and turn back to a nearer and lower hope. And we cannot turn if we would, for the old external authority of the Church is a halting place we have in God's wise providence long passed, and by no preaching of submission can it be found again. Safety is not behind, but before, and the demand which should ever ring more loudly in our ears is to inquire more earnestly, more humbly, more patiently, more utterly in the spirit of love and with a more exclusive regard to the interests of truth. So shall we follow Him who is True and see the glory of His Kingdom which is Love.

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